GAZETTEER OF INDIA

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WEST BENGAL

BĀNKURĀ

WEST BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

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By

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PREFACE

In presenting this volume, the second in the series of West Bengal District Gazetteers now being published under a scheme jointly sponsored and financed by the Union and the State Governments, I should like to say at the outset that it is by no means a rehash of its predecessor written by L. S. S. O'Malley in 1908 but is altogether a new book both in its treatment and contents. It closely follows the pattern approved by the Government of India, the slight departures being needed for a better arrangement of the text.

The draft was completed towards the middle of 1966 but certain alterations have since been made in it as recommended by the Central Gazetteers Unit and the West Bengal District Gazetteers Advisory Committee, the latter consisting of Sri B. Sarkar, I.C.S. (Retd.), Chairman; Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, F.N.I.; Dr. Bhabatosh Datta, M.A., Ph.D.; Dr. Nalinakshya Datta, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.; Prof. Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, M.A., Ph.D.; Prof. Pratul Chandra Gupta, M.A., Ph.D.; Dr. P. N Chopra, M.A., Ph.D.; Sri J. C. Sengupta, I.A.S. and the State Editor. I am indebted to them for their helpful suggestions intended to improve the quality of the publication. Apart from their advice, we, on our own, have introduced new matters to bring the text up to date. To mention only one example, a section on the Fourth General Elections held in February 1967 was incorporated long after the initial draft was prepared; other instances would be evident to the discerning reader.

A key to the diacritical marks used is given with the Index at the end of the volume. For technical limitations, place names etc. occurring too frequently in the text have been so marked only sparingly. The photograph credits are given at p. 584.

In acknowledging my deep debt of gratitude to numerous scholars, Government departments, libraries, private institutions and well-informed individuals without whose unstinted co-operation I could not have discharged a task so immense and complex, my mind turns first to Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose who permitted me time and again to draw from their encyclopaedic erudition which is matched only by their large-heartedness. The fact that I have worked on this book to the point of obsession and have spared no pains to make it worthy of their acceptance is my humble thanksgiving to them.

To Sri Pulinbihari Sen, Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharyya, Sri Rajyeswar Mitra and Sri Santibhusan Nandi—recognised experts in their respective fields of study—I am bound by gratitude for their special contributions included in this volume. Sri Maniklal Sinha of Vishnupur placed at my disposal his prodigious knowledge of the district and Prof. Sibsundar Deb, Dr.es.Sc., F.N.I., kindly went through the section on Geology and suggested improvements. I am grateful to both of them.

Numerous Central and State Government departments and various branches of the district administration rendered valuable assistance by supplying information and data. The Anthropological, Botanical, Geological and Zoological Surveys of India as also the Deputy Director-General of Observatories, Poona helped us with their technical reports. The Geographical Society of India prepared the maps used in this volume. The authorities of the National Library, Asiatic Society

Library, West Bengal Secretariat Library, Commercial Library, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Library and the West Bengal State Archives gave us all the facilities we needed. Non-official institutions and private individuals, too numerous to mention, also co-operated in ample measure. I am deeply indebted to all of them.

My heartiest thanks are also due to my team of officers who compiled with the aid of Research Assistants materials for this volume of which Chapters III, XIII and portions of Chapters I, II, XV & XVI were initially drafted by Pranabranjan Ray, Assistant Editor; Chapter XI and a portion of Chapter XV by Suvransu Ghosh, ex-Assistant Editor; a section of Chapter XV by Satyaranjan Sengupta, Assistant Editor (then a new-comer); Chapter V and the major part of Chapter IV by Kiransanker Sengupta, Research Officer; Chapters VI, X and portions of Chapters I & II by Saugata Prasad Mukherji, Research Officer; Chapters VIII, IX & XII by Ramendra Narayan Nag, Research Officer; Chapters VII, XIV, a section of Chapter IV and processing of data for the maps by Nirendra Nath Sen, Research Officer, and portions of Chapters XV & XVI by Hitesranjan Sanyal, ex-Research Assistant. The preparation of the bulk of Chapters I, XVI and certain portions of Chapters II & VII rested with me. All the initial drafts were, however, subjected to meticulous editing at my level and I alone am responsible for the final presentation of the text in its entirety. I would also like to express my high appreciation of the very creditable performance of each member of my staff of whom Tarapada Maity and Tarapada Pal, Research Assistants, did painstaking spade-work for preparing the Index and Rathindra Kumar Palit, Publication Assistant, and Dhirendra Nath Datta, Proof Reader, gave me steady support in seeing through the unending proofs.

Finally, I thank the management of Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd. for their efficient printing, binding and block-making which have made the volume presentable.

A word to explain the similarity of many passages occurring in this volume and the District Census Handbook: Bankura published in April last year. My office and that of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal & Sikkim are on the best of terms facilitating exchange of data and other materials. We had, accordingly, lent them the manuscript of the present volume.

Another regret is that for limitations of time (we are supposed to prepare a draft within six months) and of man-power, we were precluded, much against our wish, from undertaking original research. We have, nonetheless, pointed to a number of promising fields for further exploration. Consistent with the high traditions of Gazetteer writing in India, we have tried to do our best; how far we have succeeded should best be left to the judgment of the reader.

AMIYA KUMAR BANERJI

Calcutta,
12 September 1968

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL

INTRODUCTORY

Origin of the name of the district

Instances are common in India of a district taking its name from that of the principal town in it. In West Bengal, Midnapur, Howrah, Burdwan, Cooch-Behār, Jalpāiguri and Darjeeling are examples in point. The same analogy applies to Bānkurā where the present district headquarters assumed its name long before the administrative district came to share it.

'Bancoorah' is mentioned as a small village in Rennell's map of 'The Provinces of Bengal situated on the west of the Hooghly river' published on October 14, 1779 A.D. The name 'Bakoonda' also occurs in contemporaneous official records. Subsequent reference to Bankura is found in a letter dated the 16th February 1794 from S. Davis, Collector of Burdwan, addressed to William Cowper, President of the Board of Revenue, where the place is mentioned as 'Bhakoorah in Bishenpore'. 'Bishenpore' is obviously a derivation from Vishnupur, the seat of Malla power over the preceding centuries. The original administrative unit, which subsequently developed into the district of Bankura, was known in official records as 'Bishenpore' even in 1834 A.D. when a Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector was placed in charge of "Bishenpore with headquarters at Bancoorah." Between 1834 and 1855, the name of the district (or the then administrative unit) changed from Bishenpore to Bankura. In some official records of 1855, we find the district being referred to as 'Bancoorah', 'Bankoorah' or 'Bankurah'. Gastrell, who was the Revenue Surveyor for the district about this time, refers to the town as 'Bancoorah' or 'Bacoondah' in his 'Statistical and Geographical Report on the District of Bancoorah' published in 1863. It would thus appear that although the present district headquarters was known by the name 'Bancoorah' as early as in 1779 A.D., the district, as evinced from old official records, assumed the name only between 1834 and 1855 A.D.

The derivation of the place-name 'Bankura' provides interesting scope for linguistic speculation. Suniti Kumar Chatterji thinks that, so far as our present knowledge goes, the word 'Bankura' can be connected with three different etymologies.

In the first place, it may have sprung from the Sanskrit root word *vakra*, meaning 'crooked' or 'serpentine', which in Prākrit became *vakka* and then *vaṅka*, which latter word had an additional sense of 'beautiful'. This, again, has been transformed into New Indo-Aryan

baṅka, *vaṅka*, *baṅku*, *vaṅku* etc. as a term generally attributed to Krishna in his *tri-bhaṅga* ('thrice-bent') pose. It also signifies 'handsome'. In this sense it commonly occurs in other Aryan languages of India, cf. *Raṇ-baṅkā Rāṭhoḍ*, that is the '*Rāṭhoḍ* warrior handsome in battle'. *Baṅku* (বঙ্কু), or *bā̃ku* (বাঁকু), derived by adding the affix 'u' (উ) to the basic word, became a term of endearment. The suffix '*-ḍā*' or '*-rā*' ('ড়া'), exceedingly common in late Middle Indo-Aryan (or *Apabhraṁsa*), was used to denote biggishness giving the form *Bānkurā* or *Bā̃kuḍā* (বাঁকুড়া), and this could be used as an epithet or sobriquet meaning "the nice handsome one who is to be treated with respect." This, apparently, was one of the descriptive names of the deity *Dharma* who was very widely worshipped in West Bengal under one of his names *Bānkurā Rāy* ('King Bankura'). The extensive mediaeval Bengali literature as also present-day temples, throwing light on the worship of *Dharma*, testify that this popular deity was very commonly known by the name of *Bānkurā Rāy* although there were other local names for him. The name of the district may have originated as a direct and immediate expression of the popularity of the *Dharma* cult in the Rāḍh area of which the district of Bankura forms an important part.

The source of the *Apabhraṁsa -ḍā* affix is obscure, especially when it is used pleonastically (স্বার্থে), or to indicate biggishness. Apart from this sense, *-ḍā* as an affix is specifically connected with place-names. In this sense, this affix has some definite connexions with an Indo-Aryan word which is found in Sanskrit and Prākrit in varying forms. Thus there is the Sanskrit word *vāṭa* which means 'an enclosure' and this comes from the Sanskrit root *vṛ* (বৃ) meaning 'to cover' or 'to surround'. We have also the Sanskrit word *vṛta* (বৃত) meaning 'surrounded' and this in Prākrit became *vaṭa* which again was taken over into Sanskrit as the name of the banyan tree, and Sanskrit *vaṭa* became *baḍ* (বড়) in Bengali, Hindi etc. (বট, *vaṭa* or *baṭ*, in the sense of the tree, is a Sanskrit borrowing in Bengali). *Vaṭa* gave an extension *vāṭa*—'an arena' or 'an enclosed area', e.g. *akṣavāṭa* (অক্ষবাট) in Sanskirt whence we have the word *ākhāḍā*/*ākhārā*, subsequently transformed into the current Bengali word *ākhḍā*/*ākhrā* (আখড়া) meaning 'a wrestling ground', 'a meeting place for religious singing' etc. The *-ḍā*/*-rā* (ড়া) affix in a number of place-names in and around West Bengal may very well be from this Aryan source. (Compare Marathi *wāḍā* which means 'a house, a homestead or an area'). Instances are Bānkurā (-ḍā) (বাঁকুড়া), Bogrā (-ḍā) (বগুড়া), Howrāh (-ḍā) (হাওড়া), Rishrā (-ḍā) (রিষড়া), Chunchurā (-ḍā) (চুঁচুড়া), Somrā (-ḍā) (সোমড়া), Khātrā (-ḍā) (খাতড়া), Chhāprā (-ḍā) (ছাপড়া) etc. From *vāṭa* we have also diminutive forms like *vāṭī* (বাটী) and *vāṭikā* (বাটিকা) and in Modern Bengali *bāḍi* (বাড়ী) which denote 'a house or a homestead', but in Hindi, Rajasthani, Sindhi etc., as *bāḍī*, *vāḍī* or *wāḍī*, it means 'garden',

cf. the Sindhi word *Bālkān-jī-Vāḍī* which means a kindergarten school.

A possible third derivation of this *-ḍā* affix may have been from a non-Aryan (Austric-Kol or Mundā) source. There is sufficient ethnic evidence to show that the region in which the town of Bankura stands now was once inhabited by tribal people speaking one or the other of the Mundā or Kol languages. The most common word for a house in these languages being *orāk'/oḍāk'* (ওড়াঃ), it was natural for a human settlement to assume this word in the form of an affix as *-oḍā* or *-ḍā* (ওড়া, ড়া) to denote a collection of houses.

O'Malley, in his old District Gazetteer of Bankura, states: "According to local tradition, the town was named after its reputed founder, a chieftain called Bānku Rai, from whom the Rais of Badrā, a small hamlet of Bānkurā, claim descent. Another local legend is that the town is so called after Bīr Bānkurā, one of the twenty-two sons of Bīr Hāmbīr, Rājā of Bishnupur, who divided his kingdom into as many *tarafs* or circles and gave one to each of his sons. *Taraf* Jaybeliā fell to the lot of Bīr Bānkurā, who established himself at the present site of the town, which was then in the midst of thick jungle." The editor of the present volume could not satisfy himself unequivocally about the authenticity of the first legend. He also did not come across sufficient evidence to prove beyond doubt that Bir Hambir had a son named Bir Bankura who actually ruled over the area in which Bankura town is now located. O'Malley has also stated that the name Bānkunda, meaning five tanks, is found in a Sanskrit verse by Eḍu Misra (a genealogist of the 15th century, now regarded as an authority on the history of Bengal families), which records the fact that the great poet and ascetic, Sriharsa of the *Bharadwāja gotra* (Sriharsa, the son of Medhātithi or Tithimedhā is perhaps meant—Ed.) lived in Kanka in Bankunda to the west of Burdwan. The present editor, in spite of diligent searches, could not trace the relevant verse by Eḍu Misra and is not sure about the authenticity of this statement either.

Jogesh Chandra Rāy Vidyānidhi, a noted scholar of Bankura, suggested that the *lingam* in the famous Siva temple of Ekteswar, two miles outside the town, lay in a curved (*bā̃kā*) position and considering that Ekteswar was the most venerated seat of Sivaite worship in the Bankura region in the remote past, the place may have come to be known as Bankura. Another theory advanced by him was that the two words *bām* (left) and *kuṇḍa* (a spring or a reservoir) may have combined to form, in succession, the words Bānkunda, and then Bankura. It is difficult to agree entirely with these theories inasmuch as the curved posture of the Ekteswar lingam leading to the name Bankura is somewhat conjectural and does not appear to be a logical conclusion. There are no natural springs or reservoirs near the town of Bankura now and evidence of

their occurrence in the past is also wanting. It is true that the deity Ekteswar is placed in a reservoir inside the temple bearing his name but this *kuṇḍa* is to the north-east and cannot perhaps be considered as situated to the left (*bām*) of the town.

The most plausible explanation of the town as also the district assuming their present names may perhaps be found in the very widespread practice of the *Dharma* cult in this region—the object of veneration being commonly known by the name of Bānkurā Rāy although there are other local names for the deity. This is not an incontrovertible theory. But there is sufficient ethnic evidence to prove that the people of this area—in fact, of the whole Rāḍh region—have been profoundly devoted to *Dharma* worship through the ages.

It would be found from Appendix B of Chapter III (where a monograph on 'Dharma and Serpent Worship in Bankura District' by Asutosh Bhattacharyya has been annexed) that this cult was once very widely practised over a large area. The same author in his scholarly work *Bāṅglā Maṅgal Kāvyer Itihās* has stated that *Dharma* worship, in some form or other, was prevalent from Assam in the east to Central India in the west.[1] Mirza Nathan, the author of *Bahāristān-i-Ghāibi*, was impressed by the temple of Bankura Ray at Jessore.[2] Asutosh Bhattacharyya, however, stresses the fact that *Dharma* worship was very intensively practised in the Rāḍh region as also immediately to its west.

Stemming chiefly from this ubiquitous cult, there came into existence, between the 16th and the 18th centuries, a rich crop of literature, composed in mediaeval Bengali verse and commonly known as the *Dharma Maṅgal Kāvyas*, relating to the worship of *Dharma*. Certain first-rate poets of contemporary western Bengal—Ghanarām, Ruparām and Mānikrām—to mention only the ablest—used the best of their talents to carve out for these poems a permanent niche in the edifice of Bengali literature. Most of these poets as also minor poets like Sitārām Dās and Prabhurām repeatedly mention the deity *Dharma Ṭhākur* by its popular name 'Bāṇkurā Rāy'. For instance, Ruparam, who appears to have flourished towards the end of the 16th century, begins his *Dharma Maṅgal* with words which may be translated as: "With folded hands I make my obeisance to Bankura Ray of Vishnupur so that He may keep this servant in His presence for ever." Eleswhere he writes: "I am *Dharma Ṭhākur* having the name Bankura Ray. Ruparam I take my word and compose a ballad which could be sung on twelve consecutive days." The well-known poet Manikram similarly

[1] Asutosh Bhattacharyya—*Bāṅglā Maṅgal Kāvyer Itihās*. Calcutta, [illegible]. pp. 556-58.

[2] Mirza Nathan—*Bahāristān-i-Ghāibi* (translated and edited by [illegible]). Gauhati, 1936.

makes customary obeisance to various deities in the opening lines of his *Dharma Mangal* which may be translated as: "I adore Bankura Ray of Beldihā with single-minded devotion. I offer endless obeisances at the feet of Sital Singha. I adore the two—Fateh Singha of Phullar and Bankura Ray of Baital with a pure mind and prostrate limbs. ....I adore Kālāchānd of Siās and Bankura Ray of Indās with my body bent in profound veneration." Sitaram Das, who is supposed to have written his *Dharma Mangal* towards the close of the 17th century, paid homage to Bankura Ray in words which could be translated as: "I pray to Lord Bankura of Indas who plays about in the form of a child. There are horses on either side of his beautiful throne on which rests Lord Bankura Himself." Elsewhere he writes: "As soon as Bankura Ray wanted to take leave of me, I fell at the feet of the mendicant in whose form the deity had appeared before me." Prabhuram, who flourished towards the middle of the 18th century, wrote in his *Dharma Mangal*: "With all the care at my command I adore Bankura Ray of Jaipur and bow down at His feet millions of times." One of the earliest references to Bankura Ray is also found in the *Chandi Mangal*, a long devotional verse written by Mukundarām Chakravarty probably between 1594 and 1600 A.D. His allusion is, however, not to the deity Bankura Ray as such but to a chieftain of the same name who ruled at Aḍarā which may be the same place as Aḍarāgarh near Sālboni in Midnapur district. Mukundaram mentions in his poem that he left his ancestral home at village Dāmunyā in Burdwan district due to the oppression of the *Dihidār* (local official) and took shelter with Bankura Ray, chief of Aḍarā, who employed him as a tutor of his son. The fact that the name 'Bankura Ray' was also used as a proper noun only testifies to its wide popularity. It is, therefore, evident that 'Bankura Ray' both as a divine and a human name was held in such high esteem in this area that it came to be used, in course of time, as an exalted place-name and the town and the district of Bankura came to share it in due course retaining in the process perhaps some of the rich religious and cultural background obtaining in this region in the past.

Location, general boundaries, total area and population

The district of Bankura is included in the Burdwan Division of West Bengal and lies between 22° 38′ and 23° 38′ North latitudes and between 86° 36′ and 87° 46′ East longitudes. It is bounded on the north and a part of the north-east by the district of Burdwan from which it is separated by the natural barrier of the Dāmodar river. For administrative purposes, however, the entire bed of the Damodar lying between the two districts falls within the jurisdiction of Bankura. The south-east of the district is bounded, over a small distance, by the district of Hooghly, while along the entire southern and western boundaries of Bankura lie respectively the districts of Midnapur and Purulia. The district of Bankura has an approximate resemblance

to an isosceles triangle with its northern apex at the junction of Burdwan and Purulia districts and having an irregular east-west base line resting on Midnapur and Hooghly. The district, according to the Census of 1961, has a total area of 6,871.24 sq. km. (2,653.36 sq. miles) and a total population of 16,64,513 persons.

History of the district as an administrative unit

The origin of the district of Bankura as a single administrative unit does not, however, date earlier than 1765, the year of the grant of the *Diwāni* to the East India Company. It may not, therefore, serve any useful purpose to speculate on the place the territories of the Vishnupur Raj occupied in the previous administrative set-up of Bengal or of the Mughal empire. As Firminger points out, "The actual dealings of Akbar's revenue officials with the Hindu Rajas in Bengal is a subject lost in obscurity. The division of the country into sarkars ignores the existence of ancient Hindu states or principalities. ....In Aurangzib's time the zamindari sanads obtained and paid for by Hindu Rajas can be found, but we have no evidence to show that Todar Mal had any direct dealings with such potentates as the Rajas of Bishnupur, Panchet, Tipperah, etc."[1]

The East India Company obtained the *Diwāni* of Bengal in 1765 and with it the territories of the Raja of Vishnupur came under its control. Vishnupur figured as a unit in the list of districts cited by James Grant in his 'Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal' which formed the *Diwāni* portion of Bengal. The appearance of the East India Company in the affairs of Bengal saw the emergence of a new era in the administrative set-up of the country reaching its culminating point in the Regulation of 1793. From the very outset, the primary object of the new administrators was to augment the collection of land revenues up to an attainable maximum. In order to achieve this, they realized that well-knit administrative units had to be set up and the independent or semi-independent chieftains, wherever they existed, had to be brought under the effective control of a central administration. The enforcement of this policy, however, had its own difficulties in the western-most part of Bengal where the jungle terrain afforded a convenient hideout for insurgent tribes, defaulting land-owners and various other law-breakers.

After having established themselves at the *Chāklā* of Midnapur (which was then included within Orissa), the English had an opportunity to devote their attention to the neighbouring regions. Firminger writes in this connexion, "Soon after establishing themselves at Midnapur, the English discovered that to the westward there was a large tract of country, which, although within the boundaries of the province was in the hands of zamindars, who had paid little or no revenue at all since the time of the Maratha troubles when Ali Vardi

[1] W. K. Firminger—Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report, Calcutta, 1917. p. xxvi.

Khan was Nawab."[1] In January 1767 the Company's Resident at Midnapur, John Graham, despatched Lieutenant John Fergusson on an expedition to bring the zemindars of these western districts to order. The expedition resulted in the subjugation of the zemindaries of Supur, Ambikānagar and Chhātnā, all of which now lie within the present district of Bankura although immediately after the operations they were included within the *Chāklā* of Midnapur.

Fergusson's expedition also extended to the areas then covered by the zemindaries of Rāipur, Phulkusmā and Simlāpāl (now forming parts of Bankura district) which, on subjugation, came under the Burdwan *Chāklā* and the zemindars concerned continued to pay their revenues at Burdwan through the Raja of Bagri.

There appears to have been some confusion too as to whether the zemindari of Chhatna belonged to the *Subāh* of Orissa or the *Subāh* of Bengal. Writing to Claud Russell, the Collector-General, G. Vansittart observed from Midnapur: "We may perhaps be obliged to battle it with Mr. Sykes concerning one of our perg. (pargana): The Patcheat Raja, as he says, by orders from Moorshidabad, summoned the zamindar of Chatna to repair to him and settle his rents, and has threatened him with force in case of refusal. I have written the Raja that Chatna belongs to this province (Orissa) and that the rents are already settled and that if he presumes to send any of his people into the perg., I shall certainly punish them."[2] Contemporary records[3] show that different officials of the East India Company were acting at cross purposes regarding the administrative status of the zemindari of Chhatna. Since, however, the Company had been appointed *Diwān* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa together, the controversy was not allowed to develop further and Chhatna, along with Supur and Ambikanagar, was settled with the *Chāklā* of Midnapur.

The initial years of British supremacy in the Bankura region were thus spent in attempts to restore law and order, to reduce the recalcitrant zemindars to submission and, in general, to organize the area under a single administrative unit. From 1769, the history of the district follows the general trend of history of administrative changes in Bengal. As Monmohan Chakravarti in his 'Summary of the Changes in the Jurisdiction of Districts in Bengal: 1757-1916' points out, the Company's first attempts were directed towards the collection of rents and revenues. In order to realize this, the East India Company found that certain important changes in its own nature and constitution were necessary. "Firstly, from that of a mere trading body to that of a high administrative organization,

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[1] Ibid. p. cxxviii.

[2] G. Vansittart to Claud Russell. No. 208, Midnapore, 21st June 1767. Rhandeger, Midnapur Old Records.

[3] G. Vansittart to Francis Sykes. No. 210, Midnapore, 25th June 1767, Rhandeger, Midnapur Old Records.

and secondly, from an exclusively oriental type of government to a government more in consonance with British ideals. The earliest period of its administration from 1757 to 1793 is filled with the signs of struggles of such transition."[1] The Company needed a number of officials with considerable local knowledge in methods to improve revenue collections. The Select Committee, accordingly, passed a general resolution on the 16th August 1769 appointing an official in charge of each district under the name of 'Supravisor'. The duties of a Supravisor were to make minute local investigations and to gather as much information regarding revenue matters as possible. To start with, the Supravisors were under the immediate control of the Resident at Murshidabad but under the administrative changes adopted in July 1770, they came under the supervision of the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad.

The Company decided in 1772 to set itself up as the *Dīwān* and to take upon itself, through the agency of its servants, the entire care and management of revenues. Muhammad Reza Khan was dismissed from his post of *Nāib-Dīwān* and in September of that year the Controlling Council at Murshidabad was abolished. The local officers came under the direct supervision of the Governor and the entire Council constituted themselves into a Revenue Board. European servants of the Company engaged in revenue collection were henceforward styled as 'Collectors' instead of 'Supravisors'. A Collector was to be assisted in the superintendence of revenue affairs by a native officer known as '*Dīwān*'. A 'Committee of Revenue' consisting of the whole Council began to sit from the 13th October 1772 and continued to do so up to the 23rd November 1773. From its correspondence it can be gathered that Birbhum with Pāchet and Vishnupur were under one Collector. Separate Collectors were appointed for Pachet and Vishnupur by an order dated the 19th January 1773, but they were recalled by another order of the Committee of Revenue dated the 28th May 1773 and the revenue farmers were permitted to pay their revenues at Calcutta.

The farming settlements made by the Committee and the appointment of Collectors were not satisfactory from the collection point of view. On the instructions of the Court of Directors, the Council approved a fresh plan for future control and management of revenues in November 1773. European Collectors were recalled and native officers known as '*Diwāns*' or '*Āmils*' were appointed for all districts except for such tracts of land which had been leased out entirely to the zemindars or farmers of revenue. They were placed under the control of the Provincial Council of Revenue of the Grand Division. The whole of Bengal was divided into five Grand Divisions. The second Grand Division, with its headquarters at

[1] Monmohan Chakravarti—Summary of the Changes in the Jurisdiction of Districts in Bengal: 1757-1916. Calcutta, 1918.

Burdwan, consisted of Burdwan, Midnapur, Vishnupur (in Bankura), Pachet, Birbhum and Rāmgarh. These districts were under the management of Captain Carnac.[1]

In spite of this re-organization, the revenue receipts continued to be smaller than those under the previous regime. This led to the Resolution of the 20th February 1781 of the Governor-General in Council abolishing the Provincial Councils and replacing them by a single Committee of Revenue consisting of four covenanted servants of the Company and re-appointing European Collectors for each district. But as the number of districts had increased, it was decided to abolish a few Collectorships. By these changes, Burdwan and Jaleswar were annexed to the *Huzuri Mahāls* and on the 18th April 1786, the Committee of Revenue ruled that Burdwan, Birbhum, Vishnupur etc. within the *Huzuri Mahāls* should each be made a Collectorship.

These experiments, however, proved to be both costly from the administrative point of view and unsatisfactory as regards the collection of revenue. In a letter to the Governor-General dated the 21st September 1785, the Court of Directors remarked that such frequent innovations were attended with much inconvenience and avoidable expense and that it was time to adopt a settled plan. They, accordingly, directed that a Board of Revenue be formed to which should belong the work of the whole administration, settlement, collection and receipt of every kind of revenue together with the control of the officers concerned. Thus, the Committee of Revenue was abolished and a new Committee emerged under the name of 'Board of Revenue'. To this Board of Revenue the Governor-General, Cornwallis, addressed a letter on the 5th February 1787, urging that revenue matters be settled in a way which would be of mutual advantage to the Government as also the inhabitants of the land. He recommended that special care should be taken to ensure that zemindaries remained undivided under one authority and, secondly, while settling several parganas into a Collectorship their contiguity should be considered. It was hoped that the Collectorships at one time could thus be reduced to a number between 20 and 25. On the basis of these recommendations, John Shore prepared his well-known plan and submitted it to the Board of Revenue on the 13th March 1787, under which the different establishments for the collection of revenue were brought down to 24.

These changes affected Bankura in the following manner. It appears that some time prior to 1785, Vishnupur and Birbhum had been included within the district of Murshidabad. In 1786 Vishnupur and Birbhum were formed into two separate Collectorships and Foley was placed in charge of Birbhum and Pye in charge

[1] W. K. Firminger—op. cit. p. ccxxiv.

of Vishnupur. But with the implementation of Shore's plan, Vishnupur and Birbhum were united into a compact district according to a notification published in the Calcutta Gazette in March 1787. Bankura continued to form one district with Birbhum until 1793 when it was transferred to the Burdwan Collectorate. This project was mooted in a correspondence of January 11, 1793 from the Board to the Collector of Birbhum. In a letter of October 8, 1793, the Collector of Birbhum informed the Secretary to the Board of Revenue that Vishnupur had already been separated from Birbhum and annexed to the 'Zilla Burdwan'.[1] By the Regulations of 1793, the Board of Revenue as also the Collectors were divested of all judicial powers.

The changes effected in judicial administration between 1772 and 1793 deserve some special mention. After the Company had publicly decided to set itself up as the *Diwān* of the Emperor, certain general regulations were passed about civil and criminal trials on the 21st August 1772 under which a *Faujdāri Adālat* was ordered to be set up for each district for the trial of all criminal offences. These trials were held by indigenous officials, but the Collectors were also required to maintain a satisfactory standard of administration of justice. The appellate criminal court was the *Sadar Nizāmat Adālat* at the seat of government presided over by the Chief Officer of Justice. But with the coming of Lord Cornwallis with fresh instructions from the Court of Directors, great changes were introduced. By the Regulations of the 27th June 1787, the Collectors had been vested with the powers of a Magistrate as well as of a Judge. A Collector thus had the authority to arrest and send an offender to the nearest *Faujdāri* Court. He was also authorized to try petty offences. According to these Regulations, *Faujdāri Adālats* with *Dārogās* in charge were sanctioned, among others, for Birbhum, Vishnupur and Burdwan.

Nothing important had been done by the East India Company in the field of civil justice until 1772. By the Regulations of the 21st August 1772, *Mufassal Diwāni Adālats* were established in all districts attended by the Collector and the Provincial *Diwān* twice a week. A superior court of justice, namely the *Sadar Diwāni Adālat* was established at the seat of government, presided over by the President with two Members of the Council. With the withdrawal of Collectors in 1774, the trial of civil suits became once more the responsibility of indigenous officials. By the changes that were introduced by the Regulations of April 11, 1780, and extended by those of April 6, 1781, the number of *mofussil* courts was increased to 18.

With this brief digression on the development of judicial administration at its initial stage in Bankura (not included in the chapter on

[1] A. Mitra (Ed.)—West Bengal District Records: New Series. Calcutta, 1954. p. 44.

Law Order and Justice), we may come back to the march of events leading to the formation of the district as an administrative unit. In 1798-99, the south-west of the district which is now comprised in the Raipur thana, as also the parganas of Ambikanagar and Supur were in a very disturbed state as a result of the *Chuār* rebellion. It took the authorities nearly a year to quell this uprising.

O'Malley in his old District Gazetteer of Bankura states—"At this time Bānkurā appears to have been known as part of the Jungle Mahāls, a vague term applied in the 18th century to the British possessions and some dependent chiefdoms lying between Bīrbhūm, Bānkurā, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chotā Nāgpur. As the system of administration was not precise, inconvenience was caused by the vagueness of the jurisdiction in these tracts; and in 1805 a regulation (Regulation XVIII of 1805) was passed, by which the districts called the Jungle Mahāls, situated in the *zilās* of Bīrbhūm, Burdwān and Midnapore, were separated from the jurisdiction of the Magistrates of those *zilās*, and placed under the jurisdiction of an officer called the Magistrate of the Jungle Mahāls. The district thus formed was composed of 23 *parganās* and *mahāls*, of which fifteen, including Pānchet, were transferred from Bīrbhūm; three were transferred from Burdwān, viz., Senpāhāri, Shergarh and Bishnupur, *excepting the police circle of Kotālpur, and the contiguous pargana of Bālsī, which remained under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate* of Burdwan; and five were transferred from Midnapore, viz., Chhātnā, Barābhūm, Mānbhūm, Supur, Ambikānagar, Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā. It was further provided that the half-yearly jail deliveries for the Jungle Mahāls should be holden by one of the Judges of the Court of Circuit for the Division of Calcutta, and that the Jungle Mahāls should continue subject in all matters of civil cognizance to the courts of *Diwāni Adālat* for the respective *zilās* to which they had hitherto been attached."[1]

The revenue administration of this new district was supervised by the Collector of Burdwan, but it remained under the direct control of one Assistant to the Collector stationed at Bankura. The district was created with a view to strengthening the administration in this remote forest area and, for administrative convenience, the headquarters was located at Bankura. There were 7 thanas transferred to the Jungle Mahāls district from Burdwan and 2 from Midnapur.

Bankura continued to form a part of the Jungle Mahāls till 1833, when it was separated on account of the disturbances that took place in 1832 in the western part of the district. The people of the Bhumij caste, who lived in this area and enjoyed the nickname of *Chuārs*, rose in rebellion in 1832 against the existing administration. The *Gangā Nārāyani Hāngāmā*, by which name it is still remembered,

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908, pp. 38-39.

has been narrated in greater details in Chapter II relating to the history of the district. Strong military operations were started against the insurgents who had to take refuge in the hills and Ganga Narayan, the leader of the uprising, fled to Singhbhum where he died.

The *Hāngāmā* led to a change in the pattern of local administration and under Regulation XIII of 1833 the Jungle Mahāls district was broken up. The *Diwāni Adālat* of the Jungle Mahāls was abolished, the estates of Senpāhāri, Shergarh and Vishnupur were transferred to Burdwan and the remaining area, with the estate of Dhalbhum, which was detached from Midnapur, came to form the district of Mānbhum. Simultaneously, the area was withdrawn from the regular system of administration, amalgamated into the South-West Frontier Agency, and placed under an officer called the Principal Assistant to the Agent to the Governor-General for the South-West Frontier Agency. The net effect of this re-arrangement was that practically the whole of the western part of the present district of Bankura was parcelled out into Mānbhum and a map of 1844 shows the eastern boundary of the newly-formed South-West Frontier Agency extending up to Bankura town. In 1835-36, the remainder of the district, as now constituted, was formed into another district known as West Burdwan having its headquarters at Bankura and extending as far east as Kotulpur, while Chhatna, Supur and Ambikanagar were included within the South-West Frontier Agency.

In 1834, the town of Bankura was transferred from the South-West Frontier Agency to Burdwan and a Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector was placed in charge of 'Bishenpore' with headquarters at Bankura. In 1847, P.S. Chhatna was transferred from Manbhum and in 1848 the police stations of Āusgrām, Pothnā and Indās were transferred to the East Burdwan district. In 1851, Indas was re-transferred to West Burdwan. At the time of the Mutiny, Bankura comprised only the eastern half of the present district. The town of Bankura was at its western extremity and nearly all the region to the west of the Bankura-Raniganj road and Bankura-Khatra road belonged to Manbhum. Subsequent changes, numerous in number and minor in importance, need not be detailed here and it would be sufficient to mention that in 1872 the parganas of Sonamukhi, Indas, Kotulpur, Shergarh and Senpahari were transferred to Burdwan while Manbhum was added to Bankura. The Statistical Account of Bengal, published in 1876, shows that the Bankura district, as then constituted, had an area of only 1,346 sq. miles. In 1879, Khatra, Raipur and Simlapal police stations corresponding to the parganas of Supur, Ambikanagar, Raipur, Syamsundarpur, Phulkusma, Simlapal and Bhalaidiha were transferred from the Manbhum district and the police stations of Sonamukhi, Kotulpur and Indas were re-transferred from the Burdwan district.

Bankura district thus attained its present dimensions in the year 1879 when the subdivision of Vishnupur was created. The District Judgeship, however, still continued to cover West Burdwan and Bankura and it was not until 1881 that a separate District Judgeship was created for Bankura exclusively. Bankura district, as an administrative unit, thus dates from 1881 A.D.

Subdivisions and police stations

The headquarters of the district is located at the municipal town of Bankura. The district has two subdivisions : the Sadar or Bankura lying to the west and Vishnupur lying to its east. Territorially, there is a palpable imbalance between the two; the Sadar subdivision comprises nearly two-thirds of the total area of the district while the remaining one-third falls within Vishnupur subdivision having its headquarters at the municipal town of the same name. There are 3,847 mauzas in the district grouped into 19 police stations of which 13 fall in Sadar and 6 in Vishnupur subdivision. The police stations within the former are Bānkurā, Ondā, Tāldāṅgrā, Simlāpāl, Rāipur, Rānibāndh, Khātrā, Indpur, Chhātnā, Gaṅgājalghāṭi, Sāltorā, Mejiā and Barjorā and those in the latter are Vishnupur, Joypur, Kotulpur, Indās, Pātrasāyer and Sonāmukhi. Besides Bankura and Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, the headquarters of the police station of that name, is the only other municipal town in the district. Khatra in the Sadar subdivision and Patrasayer in the Vishnupur subdivision, which are respectively the headquarters of the police stations of those names, were treated as towns in the 1961 Census. There are 22 Blocks in the district, details of which have been given in Chapter VIII.

TOPOGRAPHY

Natural divisions, configuration, scenery etc.

Taken as a whole, the district forms an intermediate tract lying between the rice-producing alluvial plains of Bengal to the east and the Chotanāgpur plateau on the west. The entire subdivision of Vishnupur as also some of the eastern thanas of the Sadar subdivision, namely Simlapal, Taldangra, Gangajalghati and Barjora may be broadly described as a level country not materially different from the flat plains in the adjoining districts of Burdwan and Hooghly. Along the middle of the district, the ground surface rises gradually in undulating plains, the elevations becoming more pronounced towards the west where the land is interspersed with hillocks and broken up into low ridges and valleys. The terrain in the police stations touching the western boundaries of the district generally consists of lateritic ridges covered with sparse forest growths and pleasant valleys. Towards the extreme north-west, the undulations become still more pronounced as the Chotanagpur plateau is reached. In this area, the Susuniā and Bihārināth hills stand out prominently from the surrounding country.

The district may thus be divided broadly into three topographic regions: the hilly country to the west, the connecting undulating tract

in the middle, and the level alluvial plains to the east—one merging indistinguishably into the other. This noticeable topographic difference between the eastern deltaic tracts and the rolling uplands and isolated hills to the west has been well described by William Hunter: "In Bānkurā the alluvial flats end in the undulations, isolated peaks, and short, low ranges which form the advanced guard of the hill system of the central Indian plateau. A poor, ferruginous soil and hard beds of laterite here take the place of the fertile deltaic detritus, with expanses of scrub-jungle and *sāl* wood for the closely-tilled village lands of the east."[1]

In the eastern part of the district, extensive paddy fields stretching up to the horizon are emerald during the rains, golden yellow in autumn with the promise of a rich harvest and parched and dry in hot weather. The cultivated expanses are fringed by quiet, restful hamlets nestling amidst clumps of bamboos, groves of mangoes and plantains with slender palms raising their leafy heads here and there. In the undulating tract as also further to the west, the soil has a rich ochre colour and is covered with low jungle though traces of taller forest trees may occasionally be seen. Over the last few decades, the hilly tracts of Bankura in particular have been so much denuded of noble forest growth which once existed there that Government efforts are now directed towards bringing large areas under planned afforestation. On higher ground in the western fringe of the district, the hill sides are covered with fresh verdure during and immediately after the rains with emerald strips of cultivated patches lying along the valleys. During summer, the dry ochre soil and the scarcity of trees lend a dreary appearance to this part of the country which, however, undergoes a magical change during and after the monsoons with tender foliage sprouting all over the torrid face of the scrub jungle. The extensive *sāl* forests put on a vernal garb of green and the spectacle extending for miles in many places presents one of the most fascinating sights that Bankura has to offer. No description of the scenery of the district is complete without a specific mention of the magnificent beauty of the *mahuā* and the *palās* trees when in full bloom. Large tracts of western Bankura are covered with these noble flowering trees and with the advent of spring the forest beds under the *mahuā* groves are draped with a mantle of white with myriad flowers falling from the branches overnight while the prolific flowering in the *palās* forests sets the countryside aflame with a riot of colour. Poet Rabindranath Tagore, who for most of his life lived in Sāntiniketan not far from the Bankura district, has immortalized the *sāl*, the *mahuā* and the *palās* trees in many of his poems. It was, therefore, no wonder that O'Malley, enchanted by the fine natural scenery of the Bankura uplands, eulogized it in his old District

[1] W. W. Hunter—Preface to Volume IV of 'A Statistical Account of Bengal'. Calcutta, 1876. p. 5.

Gazetteer in the following words—"The scenery in this part of the district has a distinctly park-like aspect. A traveller suddenly brought here might almost imagine himself transported to some English park, and in other places is agreeably surprised to find a long vista of trees stretching along a red laterite road, which now passes into the hollows and again mounts the slopes. In the western and southern portions of the district the country is more broken and the scenery more picturesque, as the upland ridges are succeeded by low forest-clad hills and wooded glens in the south, while further to the north the Susuniā and Bihārināth hills stand out as commanding features in the landscape."[1]

Hills: mountain system to which they belong, peaks etc.

The hills within the Bankura district have been described by William Hunter as "the advanced guard of the hill system of the Central Indian plateau."[2] The Chotanagpur tableland, lying immediately to the north-west of the district, sends low forest-clad spurs into Bankura which reach their highest eminences in the Biharinath and Susunia hills and these alone are worthy of mention as separate peaks of considerable height. The former is in the extreme north-west corner of the district in the Saltora police station and rises to 447.8 metres (1,469 feet) above sea-level. It is only two or three miles south of the course of the Damodar river flowing from west to east at this point. Biharinath, as the name signifies, is associated with Siva worship. On the northern slope of the hill, which may be reached over a difficult road from the neighbouring big village of Tiluri, there is a modern temple dedicated to Siva. But Jain and Hindu images still existing *in situ* prove that this seat of religion is of considerable antiquity. Further details about this place have been given in Chapter XVI on Places of Interest. Susunia, the other important peak in the district, is situated on the northern border of Chhatna police station and rises abruptly from the neighbouring undulating plains to a height of 439.5 metres (1,442 feet). It runs almost due east and west for a length of nearly 3 kilometres. Stone quarrying was extensively carried out at the base of the hill in the past. The industry still flourishes on a small scale. An annual fair is held at the southern foot of the hill where there is a small spring. On this occasion every year, the more venturesome among the gathering make their way through dense forest growth to the top of the hill to perform religious rites. Susunia's principal claim to renown is associated with the famous rock inscription of Chandra Varmā, found in one of its caves, details of which have been mentioned in Chapter II on History.

There are several low hills in Saltora police station but these need no separate mention. In Mejia police station, there is an

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 3.
[2] W. W. Hunter—Preface to Vol. IV of 'A Statistical Account of Bengal.' Calcutta, 1876. p. 5.

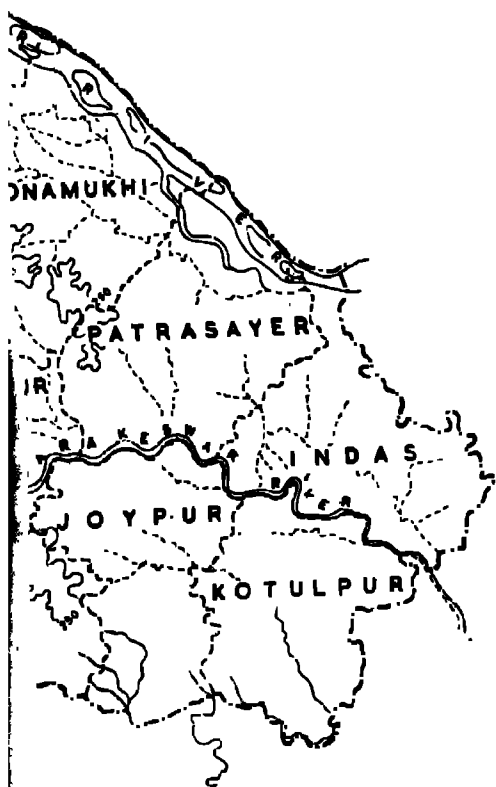
eminence locally called the Mejia hill situated on the south bank of the Damodar river opposite the town of Raniganj in Burdwan district. It rises to a height of some 61 metres with a spreading base and a sharp peak. In Gangajalghati police station, immediately to the north of the Sāli river and a little to the south-east of Amar Kānan village, is the Korā or Kāro (also called Kārā) hill with an elevation of about 122 metres and having a modern temple at the top. It has an elongated shape, running east and west. The west as also the north and south escarpments rise sharply from the neighbouring plains but the slope is very gentle to the east allowing a road to climb to the temple from that side.

In the south of the district, there are many small hills in Khatra, Ranibandh and Raipur police stations not calling for specific attention. The presence of a cluster of such hills around the site where the Kaṅgsābati dam and reservoir are now being built lend the area a very charming appearance indeed. The best view of this hill scenery may be had from the irrigation dak bungalow on the top of a knoll at Mukuṭmanipur adjacent to the Kangsabati dam. When the Kangsabati project is completed, this fine rest house overlooking the vast lake fringed by blue hills in the distance may very well be an attractive tourist resort. Another beauty spot in the hilly country of Bankura is the forest dak bungalow at Ranibandh from which one can restfully extend one's vision over a panoramic vista of undulating hills and plains extending for miles on all directions.

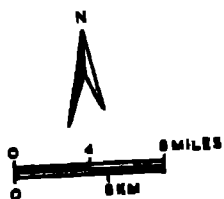
Some two miles to the east of Khatra, there is a picturesque hill, about 122 metres high, locally known as Masaker Pāhār. O'Malley, in the old District Gazetteer of Bankura, mentions a curious legend about it: "It contains a cave, which the people long believed no one dare or could enter. Local tradition relates that this cave was the residence, in former times, of a *muni* or sage, who used to reward the visits of his patron, a neighbouring Raja, by a present of a gold mohur every time he came. He always seemed to draw this coin out of his matted hair, and the Raja came to the conclusion that his head was full of gold. He accordingly had it cut off, but obtained nothing but the curse of the dying *muni*, which long clung to his descendants in the form of hereditary insanity."[1]

The all-weather metalled road from Ranibandh to Jhilimili, in the extreme south-west corner of the district, passes over a fairly extensive ridge flanked by luxuriant forests. From points near the highest altitudes reached by this road, the plains of Purulia and Singbhum districts can be seen stretching for miles to the west and to the venturesome travelling by a clear night on this lonely path, the myriad lights of Jāmshedpur flickering in the distant horizon present a most enchanting spectacle.

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—op. cit. p. 4.

WEST BENGAL

KURA DISTRICT

EF & DRAINAGE

River System and Water Resources

The principal rivers of the district flow from north-west to south-east in courses approximately parallel to each other. They are nearly all hill streams rising from the western uplands and having only a seasonal flow of water during and immediately after the rains. In summer, they mostly dry up with only a trickle meandering across the broad sandy beds. During the monsoon months, however, they become formidable torrents, the water-levels rising with extraordinary rapidity in a few hours after heavy rains. The volume of water that rushes down at such times through their channels is enormous and when the rivers are in flood it is risky, if not impossible, to ford them or to cross them safely in a country boat. The seasonal waters subside gradually over the winter months and with the onset of summer the channels, especially of the smaller rivers, are reduced to arid beds of sand. In the western part of the district, the rivers flow between well-consolidated and sharply defined banks formed chiefly of *kankar* with laterite rocks cropping up here and there. The stability of the banks has largely withstood the straying of the rivers from their original courses in western Bankura. Towards the east, however, as the streams approach the flat alluvial plains, the banks are composed of vulnerable sand and clay. This accounts for the fact that frequent changes, though not of considerable extent, have occurred over the years in the general courses of the rivers in eastern Bankura.

Apart from the geographical description of these rivers, a point of great interest--which will be dealt with more elaborately in the chapters on History and Education and Culture—is that, in the remote past, some of the pioneering settlers, who brought civilization to this jungle-infested terrain, most probably used these convenient currents for their own propagation and for setting up of seats of religion, learning and culture, remains of which are still to be seen along their courses. Biharinath, an ancient religious centre in Saltora police station, a little inland from the present course of the Dāmodar; similar sites at Ekteswar, Sonātopal, Dharāpāt, Bahulārā and Dihar on either side of the Dwārakeswar; the old Jain settlement at Hārmāsrā, a little to the north of the Silābati in Taldangra police station as also a number of pre-historic and ancient Jain sites adjacent to the Kangsābati and the Kumāri rivers would bear testimony to this theory supported by the valuable findings of archaeologists of the eminence of J. D. Beglar and K. N. Dikshit in this region.[1]

The Dāmodar

The Dāmodar is the most important river of the district separating it from the district of Burdwan. Unlike common usage, the boundary between these two districts does not run along the mid-stream of the river; for administrative convenience, its entire bed lying between the districts falls within the administrative jurisdiction

[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. pp. 71-73.

of Bankura. It rises in the hilly country of Chotanagpur 96 km. west of Rāmgarh and before it touches upon the Bankura district, it receives the waters of many smaller hill streams including those of the Barākar, its principal tributary, which it meets 32 km. west of Rāniganj. The Damodar enters the Bankura district near the village Shirpuranāmā in Saltora police station and then flows in a south-easterly direction by the police stations of Saltora, Mejia, Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas for a distance of about 89·6 km. It leaves the district near Somsār in Indas police station and enters the district of Burdwan. It receives the Kāli Ghāṭā Jor, a small stream contained entirely within the Bankura district, near Mejia; the Bodāi leaves it at Pāṇchpārā in Patrasayer police station and rejoins it at Bhogitpur in Indas police station. Another tributary of the Damodar is the Sāli which is separately described later in this chapter. The course of the Damodar, along this stretch of some 89·6 km. lying between the districts of Bankura and Burdwan, is tolerably straight and its average width is 1,484 metres and average fall 3·40 feet per mile (·64 metres per km.).

During summer, the river withers away into a narrow stream, fordable nearly everywhere and in many places not even a foot deep. In the rains, however, a colossal volume of water runs down its channel resulting in occasional floods. The rain falling in the catchment area of the river, which suffers extensively from soil erosion and denudation of forest growth, pours through hundreds of torrential channels of steep descent into the bed of the main stream with such a suddenness that the volume of water rises rapidly to a perilous height forming a fast-travelling headwave locally known as the *hurpāh bān*. The Santali word *hurpāh* means abrupt and the Bengali word *bān* stands for a flood. Such a freshet is not unlike the tidal bore coming up the Bhāgirathi river but is of a much greater breadth extending nearly from bank to bank. The *hurpāh bān* has caused considerable loss of life and damage to property in the past. The suddenness of a Damodar flood is matched only by the rapidity of its subsidence. But so long as it lasts, it overflows the banks, particularly in the lower reaches of the river, and submerges the neighbouring countryside. This happens because of the low fall of the river in its downstream course and also because the banks there are not composed of stiff *kankar* and laterite but of loose sand and clay. It should, however, be mentioned that the silt brought down by the river is of good quality and the floods, although they cause some damage, prove beneficial to cultivation in the silt-fed area.

The occasional devastations caused by the erratic fury of this seasonal river have now been greatly brought under control with the construction of dams by the Damodar Valley Corporation over the Konar river, over the Barakar at Tilaiya and Maithon and over the

Damodar at Panchet. All these dams are in the upper reaches of the river and its tributaries before the Damodar enters the Bankura district. A barrage has also been constructed by the D.V.C. over the Damodar from Durgapur in Burdwan district to Pratappur in Barjora police station of Bankura district. It is about 701 metres long and some 12 metres high with a designed discharge capacity of 5,50,000 cusecs of water. On account of this network of dams and barrages, the frequency of devastating floods in the Damodar is now a thing of the past. Because of the barrage at Durgapur, the upper reaches of the river down to that point remains more full of water than previously while in the lower reaches below Durgapur its channel is narrowed on account of the absence of natural flushing during the rains. The river is, however, never allowed to go dry; regulated volumes of water are released by the D.V.C. authorities even during the dry season. Two big irrigation canals take off from the Damodar just above the Durgapur Barrage—one through the left bank (in Burdwan district) and the other through the right. The right bank canal flows across Bankura district through the police stations of Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas and then enters Burdwan district at a point 6 kilometres south-west of Khandaghosh mauza in the police station of the same name. Numerous subsidiary canals branch off from the right bank main canal whose maximum head discharge is 2,271 cusecs. This network of distributary canals has already benefited nearly 16,200 hectares of land in the district and has an irrigation potential of about 81,000 hectares.

The Damodar is an old river and we find frequent references to it in mediaeval Bengali texts like *Kavikankan Chandi* (*circa* 1550 A.D.). It is only natural that legends would grow around an ancient river like this. According to one such folklore, Lord Krishna once assumed the form of the Damodar river (which is termed, in Bengali, a *nad* meaning a river having a male entity) for pursuing the Kangsabati river (which is, similarly, termed a *nadi* meaning a river having a female entity). As Kangsabati was betrothed to the sea, it avoided the approaches of the Damodar and hastened to the ocean before the Damodar could overtake it. Santali legends about the river are also interesting. To the Santals of Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura, Burdwan and Midnapur, the Damodar is the most venerated of all terrestrial objects. They regard the Damodar as the sea to which the ashes of their dead must find their eternal place of rest. The obsequies of the Santali dead are not complete till some charred fragments of the burnt body, preferably parts of the skull, are committed to this sacred stream to be borne away to the ocean. A spot near Telkupi in Purulia district is traditionally held by the Santals to be the most venerated place for immersion of the remains of their dead. Those who cannot afford

to go to Telkupi from distant places, usually cast the remains in the Damodar at points nearest to their villages. Others satisfy themselves by similar observances in the tributaries of the Damodar. If there is no branch of the Damodar nearby, any river or lake is used for the purpose under the supposition that it symbolically officiates for the Damodar. The high esteem in which this river is held by the Santals is also reflected in many of their ritual songs.[1]

The Bodāi

Besides the Kāli Ghāṭā Jor, which is a very small stream in the north of the district and contained entirely within Saltora and Mejia police stations, two important tributaries of the Damodar within the Bankura district are the Bodāi and the Sāli. The former is actually a channel of the Damodar issuing from it near the village Ranpur in Sonamukhi police station and, after a course of about 16 km. through Sonamukhi and Patrasayer thanas, re-joins the Damodar at a point north of the village Pānchpārā. During the heavy floods in the Damodar in 1913, the Bodai forced a channel running directly south from the village of Hādal-Nārāyanpur in P.S. Patrasayer and joined up with the Sāli flowing from west to east a few miles away. The entire lower course of the Sali river from its point of conjunction with this newly formed channel has been shown in certain maps as the Bodai and not the Sali river. This appears to be a mistake inasmuch as the linking of the Bodai with the Sali by a fortuitous channel opened up in 1913 should not, normally, alter the long established name of the Sali river for its lower course running for many miles.

The Sāli

The Sāli, another tributary of the Damodar, rises in the western part of Gangajalghati police station and passes through Gangajalghati, Barjora, Sonamukhi and Indas police stations before it falls into the Damodar immediately to the north of Somsar, a village in the Indas thana. An object of great interest associated with this river is the imposing aqueduct, within 5 kilometres of Sonamukhi town, over which the waters of the right bank main irrigation canal from the Damodar cross the bed of the Sali river. The Sali has a

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[1] "When the cremation is over, the relatives go and pick up the bones (a bit of the skull, of the collar bone and of one of the bigger bones), wash them, pouring turmeric, water and milk over them, and put them in a new pot. This is covered with a potsherd with a hole in it (a breathing hole for the dead), in which they insert a special kind of grass for the spirit to go out and in on. The rest of the bones and the ashes are thrown into the water...."

"...There is no fixed time for taking the bones to the Dāmodar river. It should strictly be done at once; but the distance to be traversed makes it difficult to do so. The journey is, therefore, postponed to a convenient season, and till many can go together: generally, they go in December. Along the river there are several *ghāts*, where the relative who has brought the bones offers earth and tooth-brushes to the departed and to Pilchū Harām and Budhi, after he has thrown the bones, etc., into the river. He goes into the deep water and facing east, dives; whilst under the water he lets the bones go. The finale is the *bhandān*, a great feast with a sacrifice to the dead. When this is over, the mourners can resume their ordinary life; but till then they can neither sacrifice, nor use *sindur*, nor marry, etc." (L. S. S. O'Malley—Santal Parganas District Gazetteer. Calcutta, 1910. pp. 142-43).

course of approximately 73.6 km. (46 miles) and it drains a large part of the north of the district. The Bodai and the Sali are also locally important for the irrigation facilities they provide in the region.

The *Subhankar Dānrā* and *Khāl*

Bankura being a district suffering perennially from droughts, construction of artificial irrigation canals, particularly in the barren areas, was conceived and executed even as early as the first half of the 18th century. The *Subhankar Khāl* in Barjora police station and the *Subhankar Dānrā* (the local word *Dānrā* means a canal) running from west to east across the north of Sonamukhi police station and the north-western part of Patrasayer police station formed one such irrigation system, the construction of which is traditionally attributed to the great Bengali mathematician, Subhankar Dās,[1] a minister of Gopāl Singh, the Malla king of Vishnupur, who reigned between 1730 and 1745 A.D. This artificial irrigation system once covered an area of about 194 sq. km. and turned this tract from a barren waste into a smiling cultivated expanse. In course of time, after the fall of the Malla power, the distributary channels silted up and in some places their courses were even obliterated, cultivators having encroached upon their beds. Digging of the canals was taken up in 1896-97 as a famine relief measure, but lack of proper maintenance caused the system to go into disrepair and become useless for purposes of irrigation. Re-excavation, at the instance of the State Government, was taken up in 1951 and completed in 1955 when a reservoir was constructed with a capacity of 3,000 acre-feet. The renovated irrigation network has benefited 1,903 hectares of land in Barjora and Sonamukhi police stations so far and another 602 hectares are likely to be benefited in the future.

The Dwārakeswar

Next to the Damodar, the Dwārakeswar is the most important river in the district. It rises in the northern part of Hurā police station of Purulia district, and flowing in a south-easterly course, enters Bankura district near the village Dumdā in Chhatna police station. Thereafter, it pursues a tortuous course through Bankura, Onda and Vishnupur police stations and proceeds to separate the thanas of Patrasayer and Indas in the north from Joypur

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[1] Local investigations reveal that 'Subhankar' was not a personal name but a title conferred upon scholars who attained unique distinction in mathematics. The old manuscripts preserved in the Vishnupur Branch of the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad testify that there were at least three 'Subhankars' at Chhatna and one at Vishnupur. It is also established from these records that the personal name of one of the Chhatna 'Subhankars' was Bhavāni Mitra while that of the Subhankar hailing from Vishnupur (who was a minister of Gopāl Singh) was Jagannāth Dās. The planning and execution of the original *Subhankar Dānrā* irrigation system is traditionally attributed to this latter Subhankar. In earlier books, including O'Malley's Bankura District Gazetteer and the District Handbook on Bankura edited by A. Mitra, the name has been mentioned as Subhankar Rai. But the correct name appears to be Subhankar Das. Manuscripts written by all the four Subhankars, now in the custody of the Vishnupur Bangiya Sāhitya Parisad, make mention of the '*Subhankar Āryās*' which are mathematical formulae, set in verse, to arrive at definite results based on given premises. These manuscripts also contain discussions on various aspects of mathematical calculations and measurements including their regional variations.

and Kotulpur respectively in the south and leaves the district near the village Nāga Tentul in Indas police station and enters the Ārāmbāgh subdivision of Hooghly district. The Dwarakeswar flows approximately through the middle of the district and divides it into two halves. In its lower course, below its confluence with the Silabati, it is known as the Rupnārāyan which eventually falls into the Bhagirathi not far from Diamond Harbour.

Besides the Silabati or the Silāi (also spelt Selye), the other tributaries of the Dwarakeswar are small streams, too numerous to mention, especially to the west of Bankura town, of which the Arkusā, rising in the north-west of Indpur thana joins the Dwarakeswar near the village Hanuliā in Chhatna police station. It also receives the waters of the Gandheswari, one of its principal tributaries, near Sānbāndhā on the outskirts of Bankura town. The Berāi, another important tributary, joins the Dwarakeswar near Chākdaha in Vishnupur police station. The Dwarakeswar, being an old river, has many beds throughout its course over which the river had flowed some time or other in the past. Most of these meander for some distance on either side of the main stream and then re-join it at various points. These are locally called *kānā nadi* or dried-up rivers which receive a small flow of water only during the rains. The bed of the Dwarakeswar, especially in its western stretches, is fairly deep and composed of clay and sand mixed with *kankar*, with lateritic rocks cropping up here and there. The high banks and the steep descent of the river prevent extensive use of its waters in that region for irrigation purposes. The Dwarakeswar runs for about 107.2 km. (67 miles) within the district and, at certain points, has a width of as much as 336 metres (400 yards). Its fall, however, is less than that of the Damodar and its current is hardly perceptible from the end of November till the beginning of June. But during the rains it is subject to heavy floods and is often an impassable torrent.

Catastrophic floods are rather infrequent in the Dwarakeswar but when, during the monsoons, an occasional freshet rolls down the river bed, it spills over the banks at low places, particularly in the downstream course. The resultant submergence, however, is only of a short duration, as is the characteristic of most of the Bankura rivers. Due to unrestrained felling of trees and burning of the already denuded forests on its banks and also because of periodical cultivation of waste lands without proper attention to soil conservation, the catchment area of the Dwarakeswar already suffers from heavy erosion and is in a sad plight. The West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee, set up in 1959, made certain recommendations for the resuscitation of this river which are dealt with in a later section entitled 'Floods and Flood Control'.

The Sanskrit word Dwarakeswar means Lord of Dwārakā, which is an epithet for Krishna. Although the etymology of the word

is suggestive of its connexion with some ancient lore, no specific legend about the river could be traced. But being an old one, we find references to it in *Kavikankan Chandi* and other mediaeval Bengali texts.

The Gandheswari

The Gandheswari rises in the region north-west of the Susunia hill in Chhatna police station and, following a south-easterly course, drains a large part of Chhatna and Bankura thanas before it joins the Dwarakeswar, a few miles downstream from Bankura town. Its total length is about 32 km. Although small, the river is subject to sudden freshets, particularly during the rains, and, before now, officers returning to the district headquarters from tours in the north or north-east of the district or other people similarly in urgent need of returning to Bankura town, had had to wait on the other bank of the river before the abrupt floods subsided and so enabled them to cross over by the old causeway laid across its bed. This difficulty has been removed by the construction of a bridge across the Gandheswari over which now pass the main roads from Raniganj and Durgapur to the district town.

The Berāi

The Berāi is a small tributary of the Dwarakeswar rising in Onda police station and joining it from the south after traversing about 30 km. across Onda and Vishnupur thanas. The point of confluence is near the village Chākdaha, some three kilometres north of Vishnupur town.

The Silābati

The Silābati—popularly known as the Silāi—is the largest tributary of the Dwarakeswar. The point of confluence is, however, within the Midnapur district and not in Bankura. It rises in the Punchā police station of Purulia district and, entering Bankura near Sālānpur in Indpur police station, flows in a south-easterly course through that thana and Taldangra and Simlapal police stations before leaving the district a little to the east of Dhuliāpur (P.S. Simlapal). The total distance traversed by the river within the district is 56 km. (35 miles). Although rising in the Puncha thana of Purulia district (which borders the district of Bankura), the catchment area of the Silabati is located mostly in Bankura district, as ascertained by the West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee in its report published in 1959. Like other Bankura rivers, the bed of the Silabati in its upper reaches is composed of well-exposed rocks which, according to Gastrell, "are seen to be much disturbed and cut up by many irregular veins of granite." O'Malley, in the old District Gazetteer of Bankura, mentions of some small but picturesque waterfalls along the course of this river near the village Harmasra in the western extremity of Taldangra police station. It is possible that the passage of the river over such a rocky bed has contributed to its name—*Silā*, the Sanskrit word, standing for stone. It is liable to occasional heavy floods although at most times it is fordable, being a river of small width.

The Silabati, as the name signifies, is a river supposed to represent a female entity. Its principal tributary is the Jaypāndā which, similarly, is conceived to be a river having a male identity. By these suppositions hangs a tale. In days gone by, a sage used to live with his wife in a hermitage somewhere amidst the wooded glens in western Bankura. The wife died in childbirth and the daughter born to the sage grew up to be a beautiful damsel versed in scholastic learning. She was called Silabati. Students from far and near used to come to the sage for their lessons. Once a stranger named Jay came and stayed at the hermitage as a student. He was beautiful of body and gifted of mind. He mastered all the learning that the hermit had to bestow on him and thus came to be known as Jay Pandit or, briefly, Jay Pāndā. Cupid did not take long to enter the scene when Jay Panda expressed a very natural desire to marry Silabati and take her away to his own place. Silabati, conscious of her obligations to her father, a widower now advanced in years, would not leave the hermitage although she was equally stricken with love. One day, Jay Panda being unable to bear the pangs of separation any more, tried to embrace his beloved only to find that she had miraculously transformed herself into a river. It was then pointless for him to continue a mundane existence and he also converted himself into a river, now known as the Jaypanda, and mingled with the waters of the Silabati as its principal tributary. The love between Jay Panda and Silabati thus attained its fulfilment in another existence.

The Āmodar

The only other tributary of the Dwarakeswar worthy of mention is the Āmodar which rises in Joypur police station and, flowing in a south-easterly course for about 27.2 km. (17 miles) within the district, leaves it near the village Haldi in Kotulpur police station and enters the Arambagh subdivision of Hooghly district which it traverses before entering the Midnapur district where it meets the Dwarakeswar on the eastern boundary of Ghāṭāl police station. The peculiar thing about this small river is that it seldom goes entirely dry; there is some water in it throughout the year along most of its very tortuous course.

The Jaypāndā

The Jaypāndā, as has been stated already, is the principal tributary of the Silabati. It rises near the village Chaitandihi in Indpur police station and forms the boundary between it and Onda thana for some distance before entering Taldangra and Simlapal police stations, which it traverses before meeting the Silabati, a little south of the village Bhutsahar in the latter police station. The Jaypanda runs for a distance of 43.2 km. (27 miles), all within the district.

Two other smaller tributaries of the Silabati are the Purandar and the Champākhāl which run for about 12 km. (7½ miles) and 10.4 km. (6½ miles) respectively within the district and then pass out and fall into the Silabati within Midnapur district.

The Kangsābati

The Kangsābati—popularly known as the Kāsāi—runs for a distance of some 56 km. (35 miles) across the southern part of the district. It rises in the hilly terrain of Jhāldā police station in the western extremity of Purulia district and enters Bankura near the village Veduā in P.S. Khatra. Thereafter, it flows in a south-easterly course separating the Khatra and Ranibandh police stations and then flowing in a more or less southerly direction across the middle of Raipur thana leaves the district at its south-east corner and passes out into Midnapur district. Just above Raipur the river forms several picturesque rapids over rocky beds but these are of no great height.

Besides the Damodar and the Dwarakeswar, the Kangsabati is the third largest river in the district. It is liable to occasional floods of some intensity during the rains, the most widespread of which occurred in 1959 when an area of about 50,246 hectares (194 sq. miles) was submerged. A dam is now being built across the Kangsabati and its tributary, the Kumāri, a little upstream from their confluence at Ambikanagar in Ranibandh police station. The object of this scheme is chiefly irrigational, flood control being only a subsidiary aim. The overall estimated cost of the entire project, including the construction of the distributary canal network, is likely to exceed 25 crores of rupees.

The slope of the Kangsabati exhibits special characteristics and assumes some importance in the context of the above river valley scheme. In a report furnished in August 1964 by the Director of the River Research Institute, West Bengal, it was stated that "the slope of the river is very steep in the upper valley, being about 40 feet per mile in the initial reaches and about 6 feet per mile in the region of the dam site near the Kumari junction. Near about Midnapur, the slope is about 3.6 feet per mile, whereafter the average slope flattens out to about one foot per mile, the minimum being about 3 inches per mile near the outfall." (Further details about the Kangsabati Project have been given in Chapter IV on Agriculture and Irrigation).

The Kumāri

The Kumāri, a tributary of the Kangsabati, rises in the Bāgmundi Hills in Arsā police station of Purulia district. It enters Bankura near the village Bāddi and, flowing in an easterly course for only about 8 km. (5 miles), joins the Kangsabati at the village Ambikanagar in Ranibandh police station. Considering the insignificant length of its course within the district, it is an unimportant river but, as has been mentioned already, very important pre-historic sites as also very old seats connected with ancient Jainism have been discovered along its course in Bankura as also in Purulia district, immediately to the west,

The Bhairabbānki

The Bhairabbānki is another important tributary of the Kangsabati which rises in the south-eastern part of Ranibandh police station

and, flowing across the southern portion of Raipur thāna, enters Jhārgrām subdivision of Midnapur district where it joins the Kangsabati river. It has a total run of approximately 32 km. (20 miles) within the district. Being a hilly stream fed by numerous rivulets rushing down the adjoining slopes, the Bhairabbanki is liable to sudden freshets which subside as abruptly as they rise. A subsidiary barrage under the Kangsabati Project is scheduled to be thrown across this river in mauza Ghāṭsol within Raipur police station.

The Tārāfeni

The Tārāfeni, although a tributary of the Kangsabati, has a course of only 8 km. (5 miles) within Bankura. It enters the district from Midnapur in the southern extremity of Raipur police station and passes out again into that district to join the Kangsabati further downstream. There is a provision under the Kangsabati Project for building a subsidiary barrage across this river at Baishṭampur in Binpur police station of Midnapur district.

Floods and flood control measures

Available information shows that floods[1] of great magnitude or of sustained intensity have been rather infrequent in Bankura. The commonest form of flood witnessed in the district is locally known as *hurpāh bān*, or the sudden freshet, which has already been briefly described while giving an account of the Damodar river. Gastrell reports that an abrupt flood of this nature "is sometimes five feet in height, presenting the appearance of a wall of water, so to speak, coming down" the river bed.[2] *Hurpāh bān* occurs mostly during the rains and the same river may have it more than once in the course of a single season. Most of the Bankura rivers have steep and stable banks in their upper reaches which allow the sudden discharges to move on downstream where the low sand-and-clay banks fail to contain them and thus floods occur. These floods, brought about by unforeseen heavy rain in the catchment areas, however, subside as rapidly as they pile up causing, usually, little damage to the riparian tracts.

Recorded floods in the Damodar, 'the river of woes', have been more numerous than in any other river of the district. Although we have no detailed information about the floods that visited the Damodar basin in the 19th century, this much is known that there was a serious flood in this river in August 1823, which is reported to have been of larger magnitude than the one that occurred in July 1840 which, again, is described to be of much the same extent as another flood in August 1913 about which adequate details are available.[3] O'Malley in the old Bankura District Gazetteer reports

[1] Floods and flood control measures are more appropriately dealt with here than in Chapter IV on Agriculture.

[2] J. E. Gastrell—Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah. Calcutta, 1863.

[3] W. L. Voorduin—The Unified Development of the Damodar River. Calcutta, 1945.

another serious flood in June 1897 when "along the banks of the Dāmodar the *āus* rice crop was much damaged, 4,000 or 5,000 *bighās* of rice soil were buried under sand, and some villages were washed away with everything in them. There was no loss of life, but relief had to be given in the north of the Sonāmukhī thana to 1,386 persons, who had been rendered homeless."[1] The flood that occurred in August 1913—when a peak flow of 6,50,000 cusecs was recorded—was of a magnitude not seen in Bankura during the preceding seventy-three years.[2] The minor floods of 1917 and 1922 may be mentioned in passing. But the inundations of August 1935 and October 1941 were more or less of the same order as that of 1913 although the damage done by the 1941 flood was comparatively less. In July 1943, there was again a serious flood which did not cause much devastation in Bankura but it forced several breaches in the protective bunds on the left bank in the Burdwan district suspending railway traffic between the stations above and below Burdwan Junction from the 18th of July till the 8th of October.[3] In 1947, when the total annual rainfall was 1,894.3 mm. against the normal of 1,355.1 mm., another flood of medium intensity took place which caused considerable damage to standing *āus* crops in Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas thanas and many families in the Beluṭ-Rasulpur Union of Patrasayer police station were rendered homeless. In 1950 there was yet another inundation adversely affecting the paddy crop in certain areas of P.S. Patrasayer.

The Government's concern over the vagaries of the Damodar finds expression in numerous official papers of the 19th century. The earlier reports refer mainly to the erection and maintenance of protective embankments which were supposed at the time to be the only effective barrier against frequent inundations. The embankments—some of which were apparently set up through private enterprise—dated, in certain cases, from the middle of the 18th century and their upkeep was neither uniform nor efficient. Frequent breaches were, therefore, the rule and not the exception. In 1857, the Government found it impossible to maintain protective bunds on either side of a river of the turbulence of the Damodar and decided to relieve the left embankment by breaching the right for a distance of 32 km., about half of which fell in the Bankura district. In 1889, a further stretch of about 16 km. of the right embankment was abandoned.[4] Since about the end of the 19th century, serious doubts began to be raised about the efficacy of riparian embankments

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. [illegible].

[2] W. L. Voorduin—loc. cit. But A. Mitra's Census 1951, West Bengal District Handbooks: Bankura (Calcutta, 1953) does not mention of any floods in 1913 but marks the year 1914 as one of heavy floods which does not find any mention in Voorduin's report.

[3] W. L. Voorduin—Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

in checking floods. Chas A. Bentley, writing in 1925,[1] argued that these embankments were responsible for stagnation of flood waters which spilled over the banks but did not get a chance to recede, thus providing ideal breeding grounds for the malaria bearing mosquitoes. William Wilcocks in his book entitled 'Ancient System of Irrigation in Bengal', published in 1930, contended that bunds were lowering the fertility of the soil by intercepting the fertile silt as a result of which the enormous volumes of mud carried by the rivers during floods were settling on river beds thus raising them higher and higher and thereby defeating the purpose for which the embankments were erected. He also stated that the bunds prevented the water accumulated in the fields during high floods from receding and thus caused damage to standing crops.

Flood control in the Damodar basin by throwing dams across the river was considered as early as 1863 and, starting in January 1864, Lt. Garnault made a survey of the Damodar river with a view to locating suitable dam and reservoir sites. A supplementary survey was taken up by Lt. Heywood in October 1866. In 1902, Mr. Horn, the Superintending Engineer on Special Duty, submitted his recommendations on dam sites. After the record-breaking flood of 1913, Adams-Williams, the then Superintending Engineer, offered his suggestions regarding possible dam-cum-reservoir locations. Certain other sites were advocated by E. L. Glass, Executive Engineer on Special Duty, in 1918. The last report bearing on this issue was prepared after the disastrous flood of July 1943 and it recommended the construction of reservoirs with a capacity of not less than 1.5 million acre-feet and also called attention to the possibilities of multi-purpose river valley schemes.[2] In 1944, W. L. Voorduin, the hydro-electricity specialist of the Central Technical Power Board, was asked to prepare a memorandum on the unified development of the Damodar river and he submitted his report in August 1945. His scheme envisaged a multi-purpose project for flood control, irrigation, power generation, development of navigability and of pisciculture with primary emphasis on flood control. Voorduin's report forms the basis of the Damodar Valley Project which was to take shape under the Damodar Valley Corporation set up in July 1948.[3] With the construction of dams across the Barākar at Tilāiyā (completed in December 1952), the Konār (commissioned in 1955), the Barakar at Māithon (opened in September 1957), the Damodar at Pānchet (opened in November 1959) and a barrage over the Damodar at Durgapur (commissioned in August 1955), the vagaries of the turbulent Damodar have been substantially controlled although it cannot perhaps be categorically

[1] Chas A. Bentley—Malaria and Agriculture in Bengal. Calcutta, 1925.
[2] W. L. Voorduin—ibid.
[3] D. V. C. Data Book. Calcutta, January 1961.

said that the river has been completely tamed. In September 1956, there was a heavy rainfall in the Damodar basin for three consecutive days resulting in a flood that damaged standing crops in an area of 236 sq. km. in Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas police stations. The flood waters also caused havoc to irrigation projects like the *Subhankar Khāl* and *Dānrā* and the Molebund Irrigation Scheme. Another inundation of some magnitude occurred in the lower reaches of the Damodar between the 1st and 3rd of October 1959 when flood waters submerged an area of 64 sq. km. in Mejia, Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas thanas. These two floods, occurring one after the other within a short period of time, raised doubts about the utility of the D.V.C. project as a flood control measure. D.V.C.'s answer to the critics has been that "in September 1956, due to heavy rainfall for three days, the Damodar and the Barakar rivers experienced a flood with a peak flow greater than that recorded in the last 67 years. Had there been no dams, the maximum observed peak flow at Durgapur would have been of the order of 6,55,000 cusecs. Due to 4 reservoirs—Maithon, Panchet, Tilaiya and Konar—this unprecedented flood was moderated to 2,05,000 cusecs at Durgapur. Similarly, from the 1st to 3rd October 1959, the Damodar and Barakar rivers experienced a peak flow much greater in magnitude than anything recorded so far in the history of these rivers. Had there been no dams, the peak flow at Durgapur would have been of the order of 8,10,000 cusecs. Due to the 4 reservoirs, this peak flow was moderated to 3,50,000 cusecs at Durgapur. Again, in October 1961, the total inflow into the Maithon and Panchet reservoirs reached a peak of 5,16,000 cusecs and this flow was moderated to 1,60,000 cusecs, well within the safe limit of 2,50,000 cusecs."[1] D.V.C. maintains that if Voorduin's suggestion of construction of altogether eight dams, in two phases, is fully implemented (only four dams have been set up in the first phase of the project), floods in the lower reaches of the Damodar can be checked to the desirable extent.

The West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee found that "the district does not suffer from inundation or drainage congestion during very high floods; the rivers may spill over banks at a few low places, even then the submergence is only local and for a very short duration and no remedial measures are necessary on this account."[2] The Committee went on to say that adverse conditions in the catchment areas as also the great difference of elevations between the sources and the estuaries of the rivers create serious problems in their lower courses chiefly because of heavy sediment loads carried by them

[1] Source: Secretary, Damodar Valley Corporation.
[2] Final Report of the West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee (Vol. I). Calcutta, 1959. pp. 83-85.

which raise the river beds in relation to the level of the surrounding plains and make the latter vulnerable to inundations. This explains why occasional floods also visit the Dwarakeswar, Silabati and Kangsabati basins although they are not of the magnitude witnessed in the Damodar river.

During the rainy season of 1865, there was a relatively severe flood in the Dwarakeswar which inundated large tracts of riparian lands in Onda, Vishnupur, Patrasayer and Joypur police stations. The Gandheswari, a tributary of the Dwarakeswar, experienced a flood in 1922 which is still fresh in the memory of old residents of Bankura town. Rushing flood waters submerged the low-lying areas of the town and demolished the dilapidated building of the Rāmakrishna Maṭh in the Doltalā locality. There were floods of moderate intensity in the Dwarakeswar in 1928, 1930 and 1931. There were several such minor floods in the forties which were, on the whole, beneficial to agriculture. But the flood of September 1956 destroyed many houses and damaged standing crops in the Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer, Joypur, Kotulpur and Indas thanas. Similarly, the flood that visited the Dwarakeswar in October 1959, occurred at a time when the Damodar was also in flood and the combined fury of the rivers caused widespread havoc in the area lying between them. Large areas in Vishnupur, Joypur, Kotulpur, Patrasayer and Indas thanas were affected rendering about 20,000 persons homeless in 163 villages, demolishing 1,000 houses and damaging wholly or partly crops standing on about 607 hectares of land. Four bridges were partially wrecked and two lives lost.

In 1942, a proposal for the construction of a dam across the Dwarakeswar at Sukhnibāsghāt, 27 km. upstream from Bankura town, was first mooted.[1] The chief aim of the project was irrigation and not flood control and it appears that it was not followed up in subsequent years. In 1959, the West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee recommended large-scale afforestation in the Dwarakeswar catchment area with a view to controlling floods in this river as also construction of certain check dams, including one at Sukhnibās, for flood control and irrigation. The Forests and Irrigation Departments of the Government of West Bengal are now engaged in implementing these proposals.

The Silabati and its tributaries are less prone to floods than the Dwarakeswar. Sudden freshets in them are, however, too numerous and inconsequential to warrant any special mention. A pick-up barrage under the Kangsabati Project has been constructed across the Silabati at Kadamdeuli in Indpur police station which, besides

[1] *vide*, A. K. Ghose, District Magistrate and Collector's letter No. 2049 dated 30.4.42 to the Commissioner, Burdwan Division (containing Land Revenue Administration Report for 1941-42).

providing irrigation facilities, has contributed to the control of floods in this river.

The Kangsabati and its tributary, the Kumari, are more susceptible to sustained floods of greater intensity than the Dwarakeswar or the Silabati and this has been duly taken into account while planning the Kangsabati Project. It should, however, be mentioned that the devastating effects of major inundations in the Kangsabati have been usually confined to its lower reaches in Midnapur and not in Bankura district. The earliest recorded flood in the Kangsabati occurred in 1905 when the riparian tracts to the south-east of Raipur thana were badly affected. There is no record of any major floods in the subsequent years until 1944 when a serious spate in the Kangsabati submerged large tracts of land in Midnapur district while Bankura remained comparatively free. Again, in 1950, when a severe flood inundated extensive areas in Midnapur district keeping even the Midnapur town submerged for sixteen hours and destroying crops worth four million rupees, the Collector of Bankura reported that there had been no major flood in his district and that only "some damage to paddy in parts of Ranibandh, Raipur and Patrasayer police stations was caused by floods in the Cossai and the Damodar rivers."[1] The next severe flood in the Kangasabati occurred in 1953 when, according to the Chief Project Engineer, Kangsabati Project, a total area of 323 sq. km. in Bankura and Midnapur districts was submerged, crops worth four million rupees damaged in an area covering 13,890 hectares in both the districts, 4,356 houses ravaged and 73 heads of cattle lost. But the Collector of the district in his Annual Land Revenue Administration Report for 1953-54[2] did not report about this flood to be of a very serious nature. There was another flood in 1956, details of which are not available. In 1958, there was again a severe spate in the Kangsabati which affected 200 villages over an area of 271 sq: km., but it appears to have left Bankura relatively unscathed. The heaviest recorded flood in this river occurred during the rains of 1959 affecting 659 villages in a total area of 497 sq. km. but Bankura seems to have survived with only one per cent of the total damages. A subsequent inundation in 1960 adversely affected 143 sq. km. in nine police stations all of which were in Midnapur district.

The Kangsabati Project, launched in 1956, will be primarily an irrigation scheme with flood control as its secondary aim. The dam under construction over the Kangsabati and its tributary, the Kumari, will impound two lakh acre-feet of water up to the 15th of October every year. A maximum designed flood of the magnitude of 3.75 lakh cusecs is expected to be moderated by this dam and reservoir to a maximum discharge of two lakh cusecs, i.e. a minimum flood

[1] Annual Land Revenue Administration Report, Bankura, 1950-51.
[2] Annual Land Revenue Administration Report, Bankura, 1953-54.

moderation of 54 per cent.[1] (Further details of the Kangsabati Project, which is mainly an irrigation scheme, have been given in Chapter IV on Agriculture and Irrigation).

Seasonal variations in the water potential of rivers

The average discharge of the Damodar for the monsoon months from June to October has been calculated at 25,300 cusecs. This figure is based on observations made between June 1933 and October 1944 at Rhondiā, a village in Galsi police station of Burdwan district, opposite Sonamukhi thana of Bankura, where there is a station for hydrological studies. On the other hand, for the dry months from November to May, the average discharge recorded at the same point is 1,060 cusecs based on observations made between November 1933 and May 1942.[2] The average volume of run-off for the monsoon months alone, recorded at the same station, between June 1944 and October 1957, has been found to be 8 million acre-feet.[3]

The total volume of discharge of the Dwarakeswar, recorded at the Dwarakeswar railway bridge near Bankura town, for August and September 1948 was 3,93,000 acre-feet and the corresponding figure, recorded at the same point for the period from July to November 1949 was 2,31,022 acre-feet.[4] The average annual run-off of water measured at the same point for the monsoon months of the period from 1948 to 1951 was 6,33,000 acre-feet. The average annual run-off of the Silabati for the monsoon months between 1948 and 1951, recorded at the village Baharāmuri in Khatra police station, was 13,000 acre-feet. The average annual run-off of the Kangsabati, for the monsoon months of the years between 1960 and 1963, recorded at Ambikanagar in Ranibandh police station, was 1.1 million acre-feet.[5]

Lakes and tanks, underground water resources, springs

There are no natural lakes in the district except a large swamp near Mejia called the Mejia *beel* formed by the overflow of the Damodar river. There are also a few natural pools along the banks of the Silabati and the Jaypanda which are of small breadth and depth and are locally called *asura pānj* or depressions made by the feet of *asuras* (demons).

It is a common practice in Bankura to throw embankments at suitable places to confine the surface drainage and the water so impounded forms reservoirs which are locally called *bāndhs*. These *bāndhs* are of two kinds. In the west of the district, where the country is undulating, an embankment is ordinarily built across a valley and two side bunds are constructed to retain the water. During heavy

[1] Source: Chief Engineer, Kangsabati Project.
[2] W. L. Voorduin—The Unified Development of the Damodar River. Calcutta, August 1945.
[3] Source: Director, River Research Institute, West Bengal.
[4] Annual Report of the River Research Institute, West Bengal for the year 1950 quoted by Census 1951—West Bengal District Handbook: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. p. vi.
[5] Source: Director, River Research Institute, West Bengal.

rain, much silt is carried down with the rain-water, so that the *bāndh* rapidly fills up, if not constantly re-excavated. In the east of the district, which is flat, the ordinary form of tank with four embanked sides is to be found. Most of these tanks or *bāndhs* are of considerable antiquity, though some are of modern origin having been constructed during the various famine relief operations of recent years.

Bir Singh, the Malla Raja of Vishnupur, who reigned during the second half of the 17th century, was responsible for constructing a series of large *bāndhs* to the east and west of his capital to protect the Vishnupur fort. These tanks still exist and are locally known as Jamunābāndh (43 hectares), Krishnabāndh (32 hectares), Lālbāndh (30 hectares), Kālindībāndh (13 hectares), Shyāmbāndh (7.5 hectares), Pokābāndh (7 hectares) and Gāntātbāndh (4 hectares). Originally, these artificial tanks were much larger in extent but, over the centuries, their banks have been encroached upon mainly for agricultural purposes reducing their water areas considerably. This is exemplified from the fact that the Jamunābāndh had an area of 48.7 hectares according to the records of the Settlement operations of 1917-24 but the current Settlement survey continuing since 1954 assesses the area to be only 43.4 hectares. The configuration of these tanks shows that they were built around the citadel, mainly for protective purposes, which leads to the conclusion that they did not necessarily lie along the courses of surface drainage but were also excavated wherever expedient. *Ghāṭwāli* tenures were granted along the banks of these tanks to resident cultivators with martial traditions so that they could form a bulwark of outer protection against possible attacks on the citadel. There were also arrangements to flush the moat running all round the inner fort from these tanks. Although originally intended to strengthen the Vishnupur fort, these reservoirs were also used for peaceful purposes. They supplied water for irrigation and were also used for drinking and fishing. The Malla Rajas permitted the people of Vishnupur to enjoy unfettered rights of catching fish from these tanks on occasions like marriages etc. This right, however, does not exist now. But, according to the latest Settlement records, the Vishnupur *bāndhs* may be freely used even now by the public for fetching drinking water, bathing and for other domestic purposes.

In the outlying areas of the district, several similar *bāndhs* exist in Ranibandh, Simlapal, Taldangra, Onda, Joypur, Patrasayer and Kotulpur police stations. The Rānibāndh, situated in the centre of the village of that name, is a tank used for domestic and agricultural purposes. The Samudrabāndh of Joypur compares favourably in extent with the *bāndhs* of Vishnupur. Its water area, according to the current Settlement records, covers 25 hectares. The Jamunābāndh in Raipur, the Danaādighi in Patrasayer, the Rājbāndh in Onda, the Sitlābāndh and Krishnabāndh in Barjora

and Māyerdighi (in mauza Jairāmbāṭi) in Kotulpur police station are also worthy of mention and are used for irrigation and domestic purposes.

Compared to some other districts in West Bengal like Nadia, Murshidabad etc., the underground water resources of Bankura are relatively poor. But in the absence of an alternative source of plentiful supply of water for agricultural purposes, 50 deep tube-wells each with a capacity of 68.1 to 136.3 kilolitres of water per hour have so far been drilled in the district under the Deep Tube-well Irrigation Scheme. Six of these have already been energized and the West Bengal State Electricity Board is now actively engaged in energizing the rest. Of these 50 deep irrigation tube-wells, 19 are located in Vishnupur, 12 in Sonamukhi, 16 in Patrasayer and 3 in Indas police stations.

Artesian water resources are to be found along the course of the Silabati river in Indpur, Khatra, Taldangra and Simlapal police stations and borings at certain points in this area have produced a ready supply of water rising spontaneously to the surface. The sub-soil water reservoirs here are obviously under some kind of subterranean pressure and this geological peculiarity has been taken advantage of by the Agriculture Department of the Government of West Bengal who made borings at 125 different places in the above region during the Third Five Year Plan period under the Small Irrigation Scheme. Contraptions called 'auto-flows' with two-inch openings were sunk. These 'auto-flows' do not have to be run by human or any other agency; once sunk they go on functioning so long as the water resources in the underground pockets last. It must, however, be added that the 'auto-flows' are not working as efficiently as they were expected to. The limited reserves of sub-soil water are drying up rendering these devices ineffective in most cases.

Springs occur in the uplands of the district. Two of them, which are most frequented, are on the southern slopes of the Susunia hill in Chhatna police station.

GEOLOGY

Viewed in the context of the formation of the alluvial plains of Bengal with the Tripura and the Purulia hills to the east and the west, the formation of the soil now covered by the Bankura district is by no means devoid of interest. Millenniums ago, the low undulating uplands of Bankura perhaps formed the sea coast, or, earlier still, lay beneath its waters and that, between them and the hills of Tripura, there was an open bay which, as time rolled on, gradually upheaved. The Ganges, the Brahmaputra and other rivers brought down their yearly deposits of silt and formed islands in this bay and developed the Sundarban area which was soon covered with quarries, reeds and low jungles. The continuing silt deposits knitted the isolated islands together into larger masses on which forest trees

made their appearance consolidating them. The process went on and on until the alluvial plains formed one compact tract which eventually became the fertile plains of Bengal. T. Oldham, the geologist, thus speaks of this district and of the adjoining tracts of Midnapur and Orissa: "We may probably infer that the condition of the whole district before the present deltas commenced formation was a region, or, if, as is highly probable, it were subaqueous, a sea bottom formed by undulating surface of rocks from which arose numerous rocky islands, large and small, themselves relics of a former denudation."[1]

The geological formations in the district are:

Recent	Alluvium
Pleistocene-Recent	Laterite
Oligocene-Miocene	Sandstone, gravel and conglomerate
Permian (Lower Gondwana)	Sandstone and shale
Archaean	Dolerite Pegmatite, aplite and pink granite, gneiss and various composite gneiss and schist Anorthosite Hornblende-gneiss and schist, epidiorite, amphibolite, pyroxene-granulite and talc-chlorite-tremolite rock Quartzite and dolomitic limestone

Archaean: The quartzite and schist occur mostly as intrusions and reef pendants in the granite-gneiss. The foliation of the schists and quartzites is mostly ENE-WSW and the dip of the foliation is both to the north and to the south, varying from 45° to 70°. The metamorphic complex of the Archaeans is extensively intruded by granitic material. Evidences of progressive metamorphism from the north to the south have been noted. Small patches of white coarse-grained anorthosite with a few aplite and quartz veins occur at Nayerkhir, Bhālukā and near Guniāḍā. The anorthosites consist predominantly of basic labradorite with minor quantities of hornblende. Pegmatites occur here and there throughout the Archaean tract and they frequently contain large crystals of flesh-coloured potash felspar and locally small flakes of muscovite. A few small metadolerite dykes, which are probably of the same age as the newer dolerite of Singbhum, occur in the Archaean tract, particularly in the granite country. They trend usually WNW-ESE and, at places, N-S.

Permian (Lower Gondwana): Patchy exposures of almost horizontal, fossiliferous Lower Gondwana formations, comprising coarse to

[1] The Geological Structure and Physical Features of Bankura, Midnapore and Orissa: Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India, Vol. I, Part 3.

medium-grained, yellowish and greyish white, felspathic and occasionally ferruginous sandstones and red shales have been noted over an area of about 4 sq. km. between latitudes 23°25'30" : 23°27' and longitudes 87°15' : 87°17'30". The assemblage of plant fossils suggest these exposures to be of the Barakar age and, in any case, not younger than the Raniganj. Coal samples from a borehole at Sāhārjorā (P.S. Barjora) yielded a rich assemblage of micro flora with Lower Gondwana affinities.

Oligocene-Miocene: Gravels of conglomerates and sandstones, occurring as beds, which are generally horizontal with local dips varying from 10° to 40°, are found scattered in the area between latitudes 23°0' : 23°30' and between longitudes 87°10' : 87°30'. The presence, *in situ*, of dicotyledonous fossil wood near Gangābāndh indicates Tertiary age. Rocks of similar type occur as beds, 0.5 to 1.0 metre thick, underlying a laterite capping of similar thickness in the alluvial country to the east of Bānskānāli and north of Madanmohanpur and Mukundapur.

Pleistocene: Beds of laterite, which vary from 0.5 to 6.5 metres in thickness, usually occur at low levels but occasionally on high contours also. Laterite is a porous, pitted and clay-like rock essentially composed of hydrated oxides of aluminium and iron with small amounts of manganese oxides and titanium. Generally, it is reddish brown in colour.

Recent: The alluvium usually covers the river-valley areas. It is derived from decomposed rocks and has been deposited by streams. It consists of clay, silt, sand and gravel. The alluvial areas become highly fertile on proper manuring and irrigation.

The greater part of the district consists of a rolling country composed of laterite and alluvium. To the east there is a wide plain of recent alluvium, while gneisses and schists of Archaean age are found to the extreme west which form the eastern boundary of similar rocks in Chotanagpur. Sedimentary rocks of the Gondwana system, forming the southern part of the Raniganj coal fields, occur in the extreme north of the district between Mejia and the Biharinath hill and contain some useful seams of coal. Another small area of about 10.2 sq. km. (4 sq. miles) of Gondwana rocks has recently been located near the village Ānandapur about 24 km. (15 miles) due north-east of Bankura town. "A number of dolerite dykes cutting across Gondwana rocks as well as the Archaeans are found in the north-western parts of the district. The Archaean rocks are dominantly gneissose (gneissic) cut across in places by granites, pegmatites and vein-quartz. The south-western parts of the district contain mica-schists and phyllites, continuations of the iron-ore series of rocks of Singbhum and Manbhum. Of great interest are the associated anorthosites in the north. They are mono-mineralic rocks, being composed almost wholly of felspar and labradorite.

The anorthosites, together with the interbanded noritic rocks, occupy an area of about 154 sq. km. (60 sq. miles) south of the Raniganj coalfield. Another feature of geological interest is the felspathic quartzite forming the top of the Susunia hill. Good outcrops of hornblende-gneisses, traversed by granite veins, are seen in Bankura town and to its west and south-west while to the east the gneiss becomes gradually covered with laterite masses and coarse sandy clays. At the trijunction of Bankura, Midnapur and Manbhum, there is an ellipsoidal mass of granite (known as Kuilāpāl granite, starting at Mahādev Sinān, about four miles south-west of Ranibandh, on the Kuilapal Road), some 12.8 km. (8 miles) by 6.4 km. (4 miles) in outcrop, the longer axis lying in a NW-SE direction. The rock here ranges from gneissic to finely foliated schistose types, with an abundance of pegmatite dykes in the granite body. Prospecting work in the pegmatitic regions has so far been unsuccessful in locating mica deposits of commercial value. Laterite, interspersed with associated rocks of sands and gravels, forms the most characteristic geological feature of the district. There are true laterites in hard, massive beds and blocks and laterite gravels which have all the appearance of being the result of decomposition and rearrangement of the more massive laterite. The ferruginous gravels in some places seem to pass by almost imperceptible changes into the solid laterite, and in a few instances, have become re-cemented into a mass not easily distinguished from that rock. On the other hand, they pass by equally insensible gradations into a coarse sandy clay, containing only a few of the ferruginous nodules of laterite, which are barely sufficient to give a red tint to the whole. In this case also, calcareous *kankar* is frequently associated. (Locally, nodular laterites are known as *kankar* while calcareous nodules are called *ghuting*). Laterite does not cover any great area in the north, although seen near Barjora, and in thin, small patches near Bankura town. In the higher and more broken ground extending to Sonamukhi and the Dwarakeswar, it covers the greater part of the swelling coppice-covered ridges and is for the most part gravelly in character but here and there forms thick, solid and massive beds. In the south, extending from Bankura town down to Beniāpukur, laterite forms low swelling ridges which extend into the district of Midnapur."[1]

Of the economic minerals, coal occurring in the extreme north of the district, wolfram in Ranibandh and Khatra police stations and china-clay at several places, mentioned later, are worthy of special notice. According to the Mining Adviser to the Government of West Bengal, there were 10 coal mines in P.S. Mejia in 1962 located at Kālikāpur, Kālidāspur, Hāmirpur, Gopālpur, Mejiā, Bānskuri, Khurātor and Ardhagrām mauzas.[2] The coal deposits in the Mejia

[1] Census, 1951—District Handbook: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. p. vii.
[2] Source: Mining Adviser to the Government of West Bengal.

police station are in four seams of inferior quality extending over an area of 33·67 sq. km. and containing an estimated reserve of 11·17 million tonnes.[1] Besides Mejia, coal deposits have also been found in Barjora police station and the Geological Survey of India prospected for them in 1957.

Wolfram

Wolfram gained considerable importance during the Second World War when attempts were made by the Union Government to open up wolfram deposits at Chhendāpāthār (J.L. No. 165) in P.S. Ranibandh. No systematic analysis of reserves and quality exists at present. The mineral is used in manufacturing tungsten carbide and forms an ingredient of a special type of steel.

China-clay

Fairly extensive deposits of china-clay occur at Kharidungri and Jhariā-kāchā (both in Khatra police station), Dālāmbhijā, Rāipur-Harihargunj and Rādhāmādhab-Kunjagarh (all in Raipur police station) and at Monipur, 32 km. south of Bankura town. In a hill south of Peripāthār village (86°48′ : 22°58′) near Ambikanagar (P.S. Ranibandh), deposits of white-clay are found which are out-cropping here and there. The first outcrop is at the top of the western portion of the hill, locally called Kharidungri, which is about 305 metres long by 31 metres wide with a depth assessed as not less than 31 metres. A second outcrop is about 200 metres to the east of the above deposit with a surface extension of 152 by 46 metres. It is quite probable that the two deposits are continuous below the hill, in which case, the total length of the two deposits taken together will be more than 800 metres. The Dalambhija occurrence is mainly a surface deposit covering about 50 to 60 acres of land. Some geologists report that these deposits are in the form of small pockets of lenses in mica-schist and are mostly iron-stained but in some cases whiter varieties are obtainable. Jharia-kacha deposits occur about 400 metres south-east of the village Kharidungri and are mainly a surface occurrence extending about 800 metres in length. The clay is gritty—grits amounting to about 60 per cent of the bulk. This deposit is fairly extensive and the Kangsabati river is within 1·6 km. of the locality. In Raipur-Hariharganj, the deposit seems to be extensive, covering an area of about 90 acres and the clay at this place occurs both at the surface and underground. At Radha-madhab-Kunjagarh, the china-clay deposits had been worked previously by a European firm some forty years ago and they have left an open quarry measuring 40 m. × 21 m. × 5 m. which is now full of water. Below a depth, varying from 1½ to 3 m. perfectly white clays are still obtainable. The deposits at Monipur occur at a depth of 2½ to 3 m. below the surface and covers an area of 50 to 60 acres. The total quantity of this deposit has not been estimated.

[1] Source: Geological Survey of India.

R A N

Prepared by the Geographical
under the guidance of Dr. T
Map Project, & Sm. U San

are generally associated. Galena is the most abundant of the sulphide minerals, while sphalerite, arsenopyrite, pyrite, pyrrhotite are common. One silver mineral was identified in a specimen from Dungrikuli. Goethite is frequent as an alteration product next to pyrite, while anglesite rims galena in certain places.[1]

Groundwater

The level of groundwater varies from place to place in the district. It is from 2.5 metres below the surface in the rainy season, from 19 to 21 metres in winter, and from 25 to 25.5 metres in summer. The isolated patches of laterites and sandstones, the lateritic and alluvial areas of the Gondwanas and the Tertiaries form good aquifers. In these rocks, the groundwater occurs under phreatic water table and in confined conditions.

FLORA

It has been stated earlier that the eastern portion of the district forms part of the alluvial plains of West Bengal. The land there, mostly under rice cultivation, contains the usual marsh weeds of the Gangetic plain. Around villages and in the vicinity of towns, there are the usual growths of semi-spontaneous, often sub-economic, shrubs and small trees which are sometimes of considerable extent. The more important plants of these species are *ash-sheorā* (*Glycosmis arborea*), *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*), *sajinā* (*Moringa oleifeea*), *bara-chali* (*Polyathia suberosa*), *bhā̃ṭ* (*Clerodendron infortunatum*), *goṭā begun* (*Solanum torvum*) and various other species of the same genus, besides *chikum* (*Trema orientalis*), *shiorā* (*Streblus asper*) and *dumur* (*Ficus hispida*). Some other varieties of figs, most notably *pipal* and banyan, with the red cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*), mango (*Mangifera indica*) and *jiyal* (*Odina wodier*) make up the arborescent part of these thickets, in which *khejur* (*Phoenix sylvestris*) and *tāl* (*Borassus flabellifer*) occur in large numbers. Hedges and waste places are covered with creepers and various weeds and also harbour quantities of *varendā* (*Jatropha gossypifolia*), *ban okrā* (*Urena lobata*), *safed bhāngrā* (*Heliotropium strigosum*), *ālkushi* (*Mucuna prurita*), *bichuṭi* (*Tragia involucrata*), *dhuturā* (*Datura metel*) and similar plants. The roadsides are often covered with thick short grasses and the open glades with taller grasses of a coarse variety, while in dry places grow several kinds of grass, peculiar to arid regions, which have apparently migrated into the district from the west. Where there are patches of forest or scrub-jungle, the more distinguishing constituents are *chanlai* (*Wendlandia exserta*), *gumbar* (*Gmelina arborea*), *dacom* (*Adina cordifolia*), *kurchi* (*Holarrena antidysenterica*), *indrajab* (*Wrightia tomentosa*) and *nishindā* (*Vitex negundo*). The remaining part of the district is on a higher elevation and here the uplands

[1] P. S. Chakravarty—Mineragraphic Studies of Some Sulphide-Mineral Veins near the Trijunction of Bankura, Midnapore and Purulia Districts, West Bengal. Reprinted from the Proceedings of the National Institute of Sciences of India, Vol. 24, No. A, 1958.

are either bare or covered with a scrub-jungle of *kul* (*Zizyphus mauritiana* or *jujuba*) and similar other plants as also *palās* (*Butea monosperma*), *bāblā* (*Acacia arabica*), *dhaman* (*Cordia macleodii*) and *kuchilā* (*Strychnos nuxvomica*). This scrub-jungle gradually merges into the forests where *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) is plentiful, while the low hills are clothed with a mixed forest of *dom-sāl* (*Miliusa velutina*), *kend* (*Diospyros melaoxylon*) and other trees.

Of the common trees and plants of economic use the following may be mentioned. The seeds and seed-vessels of *ālkushi* (*Mucuna prurita*), a leguminous creeper, are pounded and used as a blister. The pulp of *amaltās*, the Indian laburnum (*Cassia fistula*), serves as a laxative while its leaves and seeds are ground and used as a purge. The wood of this tree is much sought after for props as they are hard and durable and not easily affected by damp or readily attacked by white ants. *Āsan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*) is another valuable tree yielding a hard wood which is chiefly employed for making lintels and door-posts. The leaves furnish the principal food of *tassar* silkworms and its branches are frequented by shellac insects. The flowers and seeds of *bāblā* (*Acacia arabica*) are used as medicine and the gum exuding from its bark is collected and marketed. The wood is very durable and is extensively used for making cart-wheels and ploughs. The *kul* (*Zizyphus mauritiana* or *jujuba*) yields small, round, acid and astringent fruits used as food. The *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*) is common and the local people bake the fruit in its shell and administer it for dysenteric affections while a decoction of the bark and root is used in cases of palpitation of the heart and a preparation of the leaves in asthmatic complaints. The seeds of *Bāg bharendā* (*Jatropha curcas*) are used as a cathartic and the leaves for poultices. The milky juice exuding from the stem, when cut, forms, with oxide of iron, a good black varnish. The sharply stinging leaves of the *bichuṭi* (*Tragia involucrata*) is sometimes applied to paralytic limbs to excite sensibility. The fruit of the *baherā* (*Terminalia belerica*) is recognized in the *Āyurvedic* system of medicine on account of its astringent and tonic properties. Infused in water, it serves as a cooling draught in fever and the expressed juice forms the basis of several colours in dyeing. The seeds are used for making ink, and an oil for burning is extracted from them. The leaves of *dhaturā* (*Datura stremonium*), when smoked with tobacco, are said to be beneficial in asthma. The *dhaman* (*Cordia macleodii*) yields a hard but elastic wood used for fashioning carrying poles, bows and ploughs etc. The fruit of the *gāb* tree (*Diospyros embryopteris*) yields a juice which, when boiled down to a thick consistency, is used as a varnish to protect boats from decay. The juice contains about 60 per cent of tannic acid and, being a valuable astringent and styptic, finds a place in *Āyurveda*. The fruit is also consumed extensively. The fruit of the *tentul* (*Tamarindus indica*) serves as a food and the

hard and close-grained wood is used for making oil-presses etc. The seeds of the *kuchilā* (*Strychnos nuxvomica*) act as a stimulant tonic in small dozes. The *mahuā* (*Bassia latifolia*) is very common and its flowers form an important item of food amongst the poorer classes. The waxy-petalled flowers are collected and dried and then used either as food or for the distillation of country spirit, while a decoction of the bark and leaves is believed to be useful in rheumatism. The *palās* (*Butea monosperma*) produces a gum rich in tannic and gallic acids which is a powerful astringent and very beneficial in cases of diarrhoea. The young pods of the *sajinā* (*Moringa oleifeea*) are used as food while its roots are considered useful in cases of paralysis.[1]

Forests

Forests cover about 1,404 sq. km. in all, which works out to 20.4 per cent of the total area of the district. The percentage is a little lower than what was recommended in the National Forest Policy in 1952, namely 25 per cent in the plains and 50 per cent in the hills. If the area alone is taken into consideration, Bankura would appear to be in a happy position in so far as the beneficial effects of forests are concerned. In reality, however, the quality of the forests has deteriorated to such an extent through maltreatment over a long period of private ownership as to lose considerably its value both in terms of direct benefits like production of timber, fodder, fuel etc. as well as indirect benefits like conditioning the climate, conservation of soil and moisture etc.

The Bankura forests are distributed more or less evenly throughout the district except in the north-eastern and north-western parts comprising Saltora, Mejia and Kotulpur police stations. The shape and size of the forest belts vary widely from place to place depending on the configuration of the terrain. In general, the uplands, the hill slopes and the ridges are forest-clad while the low-lying areas and the gentle slopes with a deep cover of soil have been brought under the plough. Pressure of population as also the general poverty of the land have been instrumental in the extension of cultivation across the forest fringes in productive areas. As a result, the forests of Bankura are characterized by a lack of compactness. Several extensive belts, however, still survive in Sonamukhi, Joypur, Vishnupur, Motgoda and Ranibandh areas. The table[2] below would indicate the forest areas in the 13 Ranges into which the district is divided:

Name of Range	Headquarters	Forest area (in hectares)	Forest area (in acres)
Vishnupur	Vishnupur	13,240.26	32,691.92
Joypur	Joypur	9,624.68	23,776.73

[1] Source: Botanical Survey of India.
[2] Source: Divisional Forest Officer, Bankura.

Name of Range	Headquarters	Forest area (in hectares)	Forest area (in acres)
Taldangra	Taldangra	14,294.24	36,528.93
Sarenga	Sarenga	11,139.13	27,506.46
Sonamukhi	Sonamukhi	16,708.27	41,254.56
Beliatore	Beliatore	18,178.30	44,859.88
Gangajalghati	Amarkanan	8,798.62	21,724.69
Bankura	Bankura	7,227.63	17,846.23
Indpur	Indpur	7,326.04	18,089.00
Khatra	Khatra	9,335.25	23,050.41
Ranibandh	Ranibandh	8,697.98	21,476.47
Motgoda	Motgoda	9,577.44	23,648.08
Saltora	Saltora	5,668.78	13,997.11

The climax vegetation in the Bankura forests is "Northern Tropical Dry Deciduous—Dry Sal" according to the standard classification of the Forest Types of India. This silvan growth is dominated by *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*), which occurs almost pure with a sprinkling of associates like *āsan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*), *baherā* (*Terminalia belerica*), *piāsāl* (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), *kend* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), *palās* (*Butea frondosa*), *parashi* (*Cleistanthus collinus*), *sandan* (*Ougenia dalbergioides*), *sidhā* (*Lagerstroemia parviflora*) etc. The undergrowth is composed of *kurchi* (*Hollarrena antidysenterica*), *bhurru* (*Gardenia turgida*), *kul* (*Zizyphus* spp.), *Randia* spp., *Flacourtia* spp., *atang* (*Combretum decandrum*) etc.

The condition of the *sāl* forests is far from satisfactory. Everywhere the marks of past mismanagement are evident. The successive Settlement Survey Reports, beginning from 1850, confirm large-scale deforestation with corresponding increase in the area put under cultivation. Paradoxical as it may seem, the crop yield did not increase proportionately thereby. The marginal lands brought under the plough could not support economic agriculture and were later abandoned as waste lands which can be seen all over the district even today.

Systematic exploitation of the forests on a scientific basis started only after the opening of the Kharagpur-Gomoh branch of the then Bengal Nagpur Railways in 1902 when the private owners began to treat their forests as an asset capable of yielding regular returns. The Government of Bengal appointed a Forest Committee in 1936 to study the situation and to recommend measures for checking wanton destruction of the forests in the larger interest of the country. Important legislative measures, embodied in the West Bengal Private Forests Act, 1948, emerged from the findings of the Committee. Under this Act, the management of private forests was sought to be controlled through regular working plans which were to be approved by the Forest Officers concerned. These plans contemplated increasing the rotation or cutting cycles to 10 years, retention

of standards at the rate of 15 to 20 per acre and control of grazing and fire hazards. In the meantime, the Government set up a Forest Division for Bankura in 1947 both for supervising the management of private forests as well as for afforesting waste lands on a large scale. The waste lands were either acquired by Government or vested by landlords under the West Bengal Forests Act, 1948. After a few years, it became evident that mere control at a superior level was inadequate for scientific management of the forests. The Government, therefore, took a bold step and acquired all the private forests under the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act of 1953. Although resented at first, this measure gradually came to be accepted by private owners who realized that the latest procedure was not only inevitable but was beneficial as well.

During the First Plan, afforestation work on 916 acres of State land and 2,000 acres of private land was undertaken. Under the Second Plan the total area afforested was 2,217 acres. In addition to this, soil conservation schemes covered 5,775 acres during the Second Plan period.

The Bankura forests yield primarily *sāl* poles having 5 to 15 cm. butt-end diameters which have a high export potential. These poles are locally used as house-posts, as props for drawing water from wells, for erecting sheds for betel-leaf crops etc. and are exported as pit-props in collieries or as posts for scaffoldings or for building construction purposes. Timber production is, however, low as large trees are now rare. The fuel yield is high and a large quantity of firewood is exported outside the district after meeting the local demand. A few minor forest products like *biḍi* leaves, *sāl* leaves, *mahuā* flowers, *simul* cotton, grasses etc. are also collected. The timber, pole and fuel out-turns amount, on an average, to about 2,26,536 cubic metres per annum. The table[1] below gives the total annual receipts from the Bankura forests from 1959-60 to 1964-65.

Year	Forest Revenue (in Rs.)
1959-60	12,68,337
1960-61	12,09,970
1961-62	16,99,001
1962-63	17,83,159
1963-64	15,33,485
1964-65 (anticipated)	22,00,000

A district like Bankura, which has about one-fifth of its area under forests and which is so close to the large industrial complex at Durga-

[1] Source: Divisional Forest Officer, Bankura.

pur, cannot afford to have a stereotyped forest policy for long. A plan that is aimed at yielding higher and quicker financial returns will be more consistent with the requirements of this region. The very large gap that now exists between the supply and demand in respect of wood products may be reduced appreciably through development of wood-based industries which, in their turn, will create more employment and wealth. With this end in view, about 12,200 acres of waste land in Bankura were afforested up to 1964 with valuable timber species like teak, *piāsāl*, *sishu* etc. and pulp-wood species like *ākāshmoni* and eucalyptus. There are also indications that coppice *sāl* may be replaced by timber species like *sāl*, teak, *sishu*, *piāsāl* and quick growing species like eucalyptus, *ākāshmoni* etc. by clear-felling with artificial regeneration. After these changes take place, the forests of Bankura are likely to contribute much more to the development of the district than before.

Preservation of wild life

It has been stated earlier that most of the big game, once found in the district, are now extinct. In view of the alarming rate at which wild life has disappeared from Bankura, hunting and killing of wild animals and birds, except carnivora in protected forests, have been prohibited since 1959. At the same time, two aviaries—one at Joypur and the other at Sonamukhi—have been established for multiplication and release of game birds in the forests of the district. Water-holes have been dug at suitable places in the Ranibandh area to attract wild life. The effects of these measures have, however, been partially nullified by the periodical destructive hunts of the tribal people who have not yet been completely won over from their traditional practices in this behalf.

FAUNA

The fauna of Bankura district is rather poor, both in the number of species and in the size of populations. Such a condition has been brought about chiefly by continuous denudation of forests, destruction of the homes of animals and their persecution by man.

Mammals

Of the wild animals that still remain, the following may be mentioned. The largest *carnivora* of the district is the leopard or panther which, however, is decidedly a rare animal. Other wild cats are the jungle cat (*ban-birāl*), which is not uncommon, and the leopard cat (*chitā-birāl*), so called because it looks somewhat like a miniature leopard, are met with only occasionally in forest areas. The wolf (*nekre*) is rare, but the jackal (*siāl*) and the fox (*khek-siāl*) are familiar all over the district except in thickly populated places. They take a good toll of the village poultry. The sloth bear (*bhāllak*) is found in small numbers in forests, such as on the Susunia hills. The common otter (*bhodor*) may be seen in ponds, tanks and rivers, consuming a great deal of fish. The palm and small Indian civets (*bhām*, *khātās*, *gandhagokul*) are familiar animals in the vicinity of human habitations, and they are also a menace to poultry. The

small Indian mongoose and the Indian grey mongoose (*neul*) are common animals around villages as well as away from them. They are proverbially supposed to keep the population of snakes in check. The carrion-and-bone-eater striped hyaena is also found in the district but is strictly nocturnal. Of the other game mammals, the wild pig (*buno-suār*) is common and at certain times becomes a pest to crops. The common hare (*khargosh*)—usually, but erroneously, called the 'rabbit'—occurs in many places, especially around cultivated areas. No deer is found in the district now, nor any elephant. Many species of lesser or little-known mammals are found in the district, of which only a few are conspicuous. The familiar rhesus macaque (*lāl-bāndar*) is common in and around towns and villages; and in certain areas, it is indeed a nuisance. The langur (*hanumān*) is also sporadically found, especially in forest areas. The peculiar pangolin (*ban-rui, bajrakeeṭ*), though not uncommon, is not easily seen because of its nocturnal habits. The familiar striped squirrel (*kāṭhbirāl*) is common all over the district and the porcupine (*sajāru*) may be seen anywhere except in the towns. Of the rats and mice, the house mouse, house rat and bandicoot rat are common creatures associated with human habitations. As is well known, they are the greatest rivals of man in consuming foodgrains. Besides, the field mouse is not uncommon in cultivated areas. The common house shrew (*chhuchā*) is a familiar sight in almost every house in towns and villages. It does, however, some good to man by eating up a great deal of obnoxious insects. Various kinds of bats, all of which are nocturnal or crepuscular, are found, of which the most conspicuous is the large fruit-bat commonly known as the 'flying fox' (*bādur*), which is greatly inimical to ripening fruits, such as banana, guava, mango etc. In addition, three kinds of pipistrelles (*chāmchikā*) and the beautiful yellow bat may also be mentioned.

Birds

The numerous species of birds found in the district may conveniently be classified into game and non-game birds. Of the game birds, the little grebe or dabchick (*pāndubi*) is common in ponds and tanks. Most of the ducks and geese found in the district migrate from northern countries in winter. The more important of them are the bar-headed goose (*rāj-hāns*), brahminy duck (*chakrabāk, chakhā-chakhi*), pintail (*dig-hāns*), common teal (*bigri-hāns*), garganey (*giriā*), red-crested pochard (*lālsir*) and the white-eyed pochard (*bhuti-hāns*). A few resident ducks are also seen, of which the cotton teal (*bāli-hāns*) is common, the lesser whistling teal (*sarāl*) and comb-duck (*nāki-hāns*) are not uncommon, but the spotbill or grey duck is rather scarce. The Indian peafowl (*mayur*)—the national bird of India—occurs in hospitable places. The red junglefowl (*ban-murgi*) which used to be plentiful some decades ago, is now very rare. The grey partridge (*titir*) is common, but the black partridge (*kālo-titir*) has perhaps been already exterminated from the district,

The grey and bush quail, the Indian button-quail and common bustard-quail (*baţer*) are also frequently seen in areas covered with scrub. The beautiful lesser florican (*likh*) of the grass and scrub probably does not occur in the district any more.

Of the other non-game birds found in the district, the following are worthy of mention: little cormorant (*pānkauri*), darter or snake bird (*gayār*), several kinds of birds of prey, including the highly beneficial vultures (*sakun*), eagles (*sāpmār, korāl*), *shikra* (*bāz*), kites (*chil*), harriers, falcons (*laggar*), various kinds of herons and egrets (*bak*), ibises (*karhā-kol*), storks (*janghil, mānik-jor, sāmuk-khol*), stone-curlew, lapwing (*ţiţţibh*), stilt, tern (*gāng-chil*), cuckoos (*bau-kathā-kao, pāpiyā, chātak, kokil, kuko*), parakeets (*chandanā, ţiyā, phulţusi*), owls (*lakshmi-pechā, hutom-pechā, kuţure-pechā*), roller (*nilkanţha*), bee-eaters (*bānspāti*), hoopoe (*hudhud*), hornbill (*dhanesh*), swifts (*bātāsi, tālchoch*), woodpeckers (*kāţh-ţhokrā*), larks (*māţh-charāi, bharat*), swallows (*ābābil*), wagtails (*khanjan*), pipits, minivets (*sayāli*), cuckoo-shrikes (*kāsyā*), bulbuls, iora (*phaţik-jal*), chloropsis (*hārewa*), shrikes (*kārkāţā*), thrushes (*doyel, kālchuri, dams*), babblers (*chhātāre* and others), warblers including the tailor bird (*ţunţuni*), flycatchers including the magnificent paradise flycatcher (*phitā-bulbul, dudh-rāj*), grey tit (*rāmgangā*), nuthatch (*chorā-pākhi*), Tickell's flowerpecker (*phulchuski*) which is the smallest Indian bird, sunbirds (*mouchuski, durgā-ţunţuni*), *muniās*, weaver-birds (*bābui*), sparrows (*charāi*), various kinds of mynas (*rām-sālik, gooey-sālik, gāng-sālik, jangli-mynā, harbolā, pāwui*), orioles (*bene-bau*), drongos (*fingā, kesh-rāj*), crows (*pāti-kāk, dānr-kāk*), tree pie (*hānri-chāchā*).

Among the game birds of the marshes, the white-breasted water-hen (*pān-pāirā, dāhuk*), Indian moor-hen (*jal-murgi*), purple moor-hen (*kāmpākhi*), coot (*karandāb*), bronze-winged jacana (*jal-pipi*), pheasant-tailed jacana (*jal-mayur*), various stints and sandpipers (*chāhā*), pintail and fantail snipes (*kādākhōchā*), and the painted snipe (*rāj-chāhā*) deserve mention. The Indian courser (*nukri*) may be seen in fallow land and scrub where the common sandgrouse (*bhāt-titir*) also occurs. Of the pigeons and doves, the orange-breasted and the imperial green pigeons (*hariāl*), blue rock pigeon (*pāirā*), and several kinds of doves (*ghughu*) are familiar.

Reptiles

The marsh crocodile (*kumir*), which once occurred in the district, is found no more. Of the fresh-water turtles and tortoises, the terrapin and the common and Gangetic mud-turtles are frequently met with. Many kinds of lizards occur in the district, of which the house-geckos, 'tokay' (*ţakkhak*), garden lizard ('blood-sucker' or *girgiţi*), skink, common and yellow monitors (*go-sāp*) are wide-spread. Of the many species of snakes, the python (*mayāl*), cobra (*keuţe, gokhro*), common and banded kraits, Russel's viper (*chandrabora*), rat-snake (*dhamnā*), blind snake (*puiye*), wolf snake,

Indian gamma, cat snake and freshwater snakes, namely checkered keelback (*heley*) and enhydris (*dhonrā*) are conspicuous.

Fishes

Many kinds of fishes are found in the district, but the following are of greater economic importance. Cat fishes like the *māgur* and *singi* are the familiar live fishes, but the common cat fish (*boāl*), aptly called the 'freshwater shark', is a great menace to small fry. The major carps like *rohu*, *kātlā*, *mrigel* and *kālbose* are the most important food fishes. Besides, the murrels, like the *laṭā*, *sāl*, *sole*, *gajār*, *chelā*, *bāṭā* and *ilis* in larger rivers in season as also various kinds of *punṭi*, deserve mention. The following additional varieties are also available in the district: *Anabas testudineus* (*koi*), *Mystus seenghala* (*āire*), *Palaemon* sp. (*galdā*, *bāgdā*), *Amblypharyngodon mola* (*mauralā*), *Ambassis nama* (*chāndā*), *Mystus* sp. (*tangrā*), *Notopterus chitala* (*chital*), *Gadusia chapra* (*khayrā*), *Mastacembalus armatus* (*bān*), *Mastacembalus pancalus* (*pānkāl*) and *Notopterus notopterus* (*falui*).

Miscellaneous

Three common varieties of frogs are found in the district, namely mudskipper, little green frog and the Indian bullfrog (*kolā-bang* or *sonā-bang*), in addition to the common toad (*kuno-bang*). Several kinds of crabs are also found and they form important items of human food.

Vanishing zoological types

A comparison of the foregoing report on the fauna of Bankura, which is based on the latest information supplied by the Zoological Survey of India, with that in O'Malley's Bankura District Gazetteer published in 1908, will reveal the zoological types that have completely vanished or are vanishing from the district. O'Malley wrote: "tigers still occasionally frequent the jungles at Sāltorā in the north-west and in the Raipur thana to the south-west. A few man-eaters are also said to be found in the extensive jungles ... in thana Khātrā, which have an aggregate area of 12 square miles. ... Spotted deer are reported to have their habitat at the Turā hill and in the jungles in thana Raipur." Tigers and deer are no longer found in Bankura. Wild elephants had disappeared from the district before O'Malley's time and he reported that the last occasion on which these animals visited the district was in 1898-1900 "when three of these beasts roamed through the south-western portion of the district and gradually worked their way to within 12 miles of the town of Bānkurā." Leopards and bears are not as common now as they used to be in O'Malley's time, some 60 years ago. Marsh crocodiles, which once existed in the district, are found no more. The reasons for the disappearance of big game from the Bankura forests are "due to the gradual thinning out and, in many places, the entire extermination of the extensive *sāl* jungles which once covered the uplands, and to the continued extension of cultivation, which have gradually driven big game westwards. It is also due, in a large measure, to the ruthless destruction of animal life by

Santāls and other forest tribes who never lose an opportunity of killing whatever living thing they come across."[1]

Mortality from wild animals and reptiles

There being practically no big game in the district now, reports of mortality from them are seldom received. The district, however, harbours a large number of poisonous snakes like the cobra, the krait, the Russel's viper etc. and deaths from snakebites, particularly during and after the monsoons, are not uncommon. That the district was previously infested with a much larger number of snakes, poisonous or otherwise, is proved from the ubiquitous worship of *Manasā*, the serpent goddess. The deity still commands high respect among all classes of the local population although due to the extension of cultivation and the denudation of forest areas, the snake population in the district has perhaps substantially decreased.

The table below depicts the incidence of deaths from snakebites and wild animals in the district.

DEATHS FROM SNAKEBITES AND WILD ANIMALS IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1948-59[2]

Year	From snakebites	From wild animals
1948	113	2
1949	105	5
1950	63	7
1951	112	4
1952	110	6
1953	*	*
1954	*	*
1955	100	3
1956	*	*
1957	81	1
1958	*	*
1959	83	5

* Figures not available.

CLIMATE

Location of observatories and rain-recording centres

There is no meteorological observatory in Bankura at present. There used to be one in the past, but it has since been abolished. There are, however, 27 rain-recording centres well distributed over the district, the locations of which are given in the statement appended to this chapter.

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. pp. 14-15.

[2] Source: Annual Reports on the State of Health in West Bengal, published by the Directorate of Health Services, Government of West Bengal.

Climate and seasons

The climate of the district is characterized by an oppressively hot summer, high humidity nearly all the year round and well distributed rainfall during the monsoon months. The cold weather starts from about the middle of November and lasts till the end of February. The period from March to May represents the summer. The south-west monsoons occur from June to September and the interval from October to the first half of November constitutes the post-monsoon period.

Rainfall

Records of rainfall, as available from the 27 stations mentioned above, cover various periods ranging from 40 to 96 years. (The details for the whole district are compiled in a tabulated statement appended at the end of this chapter). The average annual rainfall in the district is 1,303.7 mm. (51.33"). The average rainfall during the monsoon months, June to September, constitutes about 78 per cent of the annual precipitation. July and August are the rainiest months. The variation in the rainfall from year to year is not significant. In the 50-year period from 1901 to 1950, the highest annual rainfall, amounting to 132 per cent of the normal, occurred in 1922, while 1935 was the year with the lowest rainfall recorded at 76 per cent of the normal. Over the same period of 50 years, rainfall of less than 80 per cent of the normal occurred in only 4 years and no two of them were consecutive, considering the district as a whole. At individual stations, however, precipitations of less than 80 per cent of the normal occurred in 3 consecutive years, once at Indpur and Palāsdāngā, and for 2 consecutive years, once or twice at a few stations.

Over the same 50-year period, rainfall between 901 and 1,000 mm. occurred in 2 years (not necessarily consecutive), between 1,001 and 1,100 mm. in 4 years, between 1,101 and 1,200 mm. in 8 years, between 1,201 and 1,300 mm. in 13 years, between 1,301 and 1,400 mm. in 7 years, between 1,401 and 1,500 mm. in 5 years, between 1,501 and 1,600 mm. in 7 years, between 1,601 and 1,700 mm. in 3 years and between 1,701 and 1,800 mm. in one year only. These figures reveal that the most usual annual amount of rainfall in the district ranges between 1,101 and 1,400 mm. On an average, there are 68 rainy days (i.e. days with rainfall of 2.5 mm. 10 cents or more) in a year. This number varies from 64 at Saltora and Maliara to 77 at Vishnupur. The heaviest rainfall within 24 hours, recorded at any station in the district, was 599.2 mm. (23.59") at Taldangra on August 10, 1950.

Temperature

The following informations are based on the records of the former meteorological observatory at Bankura as also those of the observatories located in the neighbouring districts. Temperature starts rising rapidly in Bankura from the beginning of March. The summer heat is particularly oppressive due to the high moisture content in the air. Occasionally, the maximum temperature rises to about

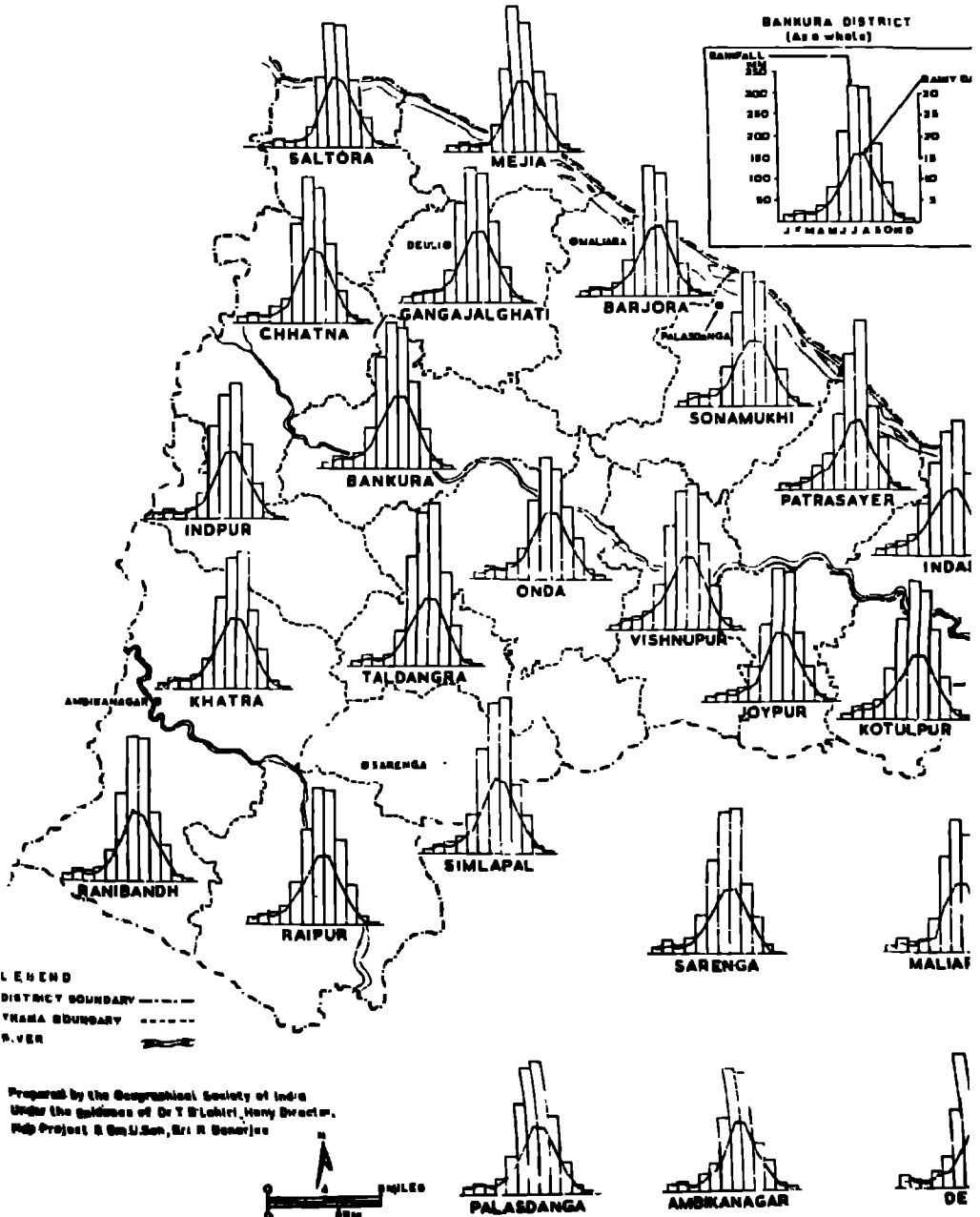
WEST BENGAL

BANKURA DISTRICT

AVERAGE MONTHLY RAINFALL

&

NUMBER OF RAINY DAYS

(50 YEARS AVERAGE)

47° or 48°C (116.6° to 118.4°F). There is a welcome relief from the humid heat—although only temporarily—when thundershowers occur. With the onset of the south-west monsoon by about the first week of June, the day temperature drops appreciably but the night temperature continues to remain high. Because of oppressive humidity, the weather is often very uncomfortable during the monsoon season, especially in between succeeding spells of rain. The monsoon withdraws early in October when temperatures begin to fall. The drop, particularly in the night temperature, is more marked from about the middle of November. December is the coldest month in the district with a mean daily minimum temperature of 12° to 13°C (53.6° to 55.4°F). In association with passing western disturbances, spells of cold weather are experienced in winter when the temperature may go down to as low as 7°C (44.6°F). On the whole, however, the cold season in Bankura is very bracing. The highest maximum temperature recorded so far at Asansol, in the adjoining district of Burdwan, was 47.2°C (117°F) on May 28, 1944 and the lowest minimum temperature at the same station was 5°C (41°F) on February 12, 1950. Since Asansol is not far away, the highest and the lowest temperatures in Bankura district are likely to be more or less the same.

Humidity

Relative humidities are generally high throughout the year. But in the summer months, afternoon humidities are comparatively less.

Cloudiness

Skies are moderately clouded in May and heavily so during the south-west monsoon season. Cloudiness decreases in October and the skies are clear or lightly clouded during the rest of the year.

Winds

Winds are generally light to moderate with a slight increase in force during the summer and monsoon seasons. Winds blow mostly from directions between south and east in May as also in the south-west monsoon season. In October, they are light and variable. Throughout the cold season, winds blow mainly from directions between west and north and in March and April they are mostly from directions between south and north-west.

Special weather phenomena

Storms and depressions from the Bay of Bengal in May and in the post-monsoon period often reach the district and its neighbourhood and cause widespread heavy rain associated with high winds. Depressions during the monsoon months also affect the district when heavy rains occur. Thunderstorms occur mostly towards the afternoons in the early part of the hot season accompanied with hail and severe squalls. These disturbances, which are often violent, are called nor'westers (locally known as *Kālbaisākhi*) since they usually come from the north-west direction. Their visitations invariably cause a sharp drop in temperature. During the south-west monsoon, rain is often associated with thunder. Fog occurs only occasionally during the cold season.

TABLE OF NORMALS AND EXTREMES OF RAINFALL (IN MILLIMETRES) IN BANKURA DISTRICT

Sl. No.	Rain-recording Stations	No. of years on which data are based	Hottest Months		Rainiest Months		Coldest Months		Mean Annual	Highest annual rain-fall as % of normal (100) and year	Lowest annual rain-fall as % of normal (100) and year
			April	May	July	August	December	January			
1.	Bankura	50	35.1	93.7	335.8	318.5	3.6	18.3	1421.5	158 (1919)	66 (1935)
2.	Vishnupur	50	42.7	106.7.	315.0	335.5	3.6	13.5	1430.7	148 (1922)	60 (1935)
3.	Khatra	50	32.0	79.8	302.0	317.7	3.6	15.0	1300.3	148 (1917)	45 (1949)
4.	Indas	50	48.5	121.4	289.6	313.2	3.8	15.7	1361.6	136 (1933)	68 (1934)
5.	Kotulpur	50	43.9	112.5	318.8	297.7	3.6	12.9	1404.1	143 (1916)	55 (1935)
6.	Onda	49	35.3	69.1	278.9	253.7	2.5	11.7	1160.5	144 (1941)	48 (1915)
7.	Gangajalghati	50	27.9	74.9	315.0	301.7	2.8	15.0	1301.7	129 (1917)	67 (1901)
8.	Raipur	50	43.7	97.5	316.0	312.4	3.3	16.5	1375.4	132 (1941)	66 (1935)
9.	Sonamukhi	50	37.6	99.1	311.7	288.3	2.5	11.9	1324.9	132 (1933)	55 (1935)
10.	Taldangra	24	29.2	86.6	353.3	377.7	4.6	11.4	1489.2	150 (1939)	57 (1918)

11.	Sarenga	36	36.6	90.4	327.7	338.8	3.3	14.2	1348.7	140 (1917)	78 (1935)
12.	Indpur	50	22.9	57.1	283.7	312.2	2·8	11.7	1203.4	178 (1922)	59 (1932)
13.	Barjora	33	31.2	84.1	302.0	287.5	3.3	14.0	1204.5	163 (1939)	60 (1927)
14.	Simlapal	33	41.9	89.9	349.5	361.9	3.8	11.7	1416.7	157 (1926)	61 (1925)
15.	Mejia	33	21.8	62.0	347.7	314.5	2.5	14.2	1301.5	132 (1946)	74 (1925)
16.	Palasdanga	32	38.1	87.4	296.9	312.7	5.3	15.7	1285.9	137 (1933)	68 (1927)
17.	Chhatna	32	36.1	55.1	338.1	312.2	2.0	15.2	1295.2	136 (1946)	72 (1931)
18.	Ranibandh	29	27.4	70.9	330.2	329.4	2.8	15.5	1277.4	138 (1943)	62 (1934)
19.	Saltora	32	17.8	47.2	297.2	292.9	2.3	10.9	1114.0	186 (1922)	62 (1932)
20.	Joypur	32	34.3	80.5	303.8	298.7	2.0	16.5	1229.1	146 (1941)	55 (1925)
21.	Ambikanagar	23	39.6	66.3	293.4	283.7	7.1	17.5	1089.4	149 (1926)	38 (1932)
22.	Salbandh	29	38.3	80.3	312.7	292.9	3.1	13.7	1267.2	154 (1936)	73 (1945)

(Contd.)

TABLE OF NORMALS AND EXTREMES OF RAINFALL (IN MILLIMETRES) IN BANKURA DISTRICT *(Concld.)*

Sl. No.	Rain-recording Stations	No. of years on which data are based	Hottest Months		Rainiest Months		Coldest Months		Mean Annual	Highest annual rain-fall as % of normal (100) and year	Lowest annual rain-fall as % of normal (100) and year
			April	May	July	August	December	January			
23.	Patrasayer	13	56.6	65.1	318.8	392.4	0.3	15.7	1410.8	143 (1946)	65 (1945)
24.	Deuli	9	36.8	72.4	318.5	276.9	0.8	29.2	1346.0	134 (1941)	79 (1948)
25.	Maliara	47	27.7	81.5	309.1	272.5	3.6	14·0	1263.2	155 (1933)	72 (1945)
26.	Arhara	29	23.4	47.7	306.6	336.8	3.1	18.3	1257.6	158 (1922)	73 (1931)
27.	Siromanipur	30	39.1	80.3	300.2	322.3	3.1	16.8	1318.5	140 (1939)	59 (1934)
	Bankura District (Aggregate)	—	35.0	80.7	313.8	313.1	3.2	15.1	1303.7	132 (1922)	76 (1935)

Source: Office of the Deputy Director-General of Observatories (Climatology and Geophysics), Poona. (The table is based on available data up to 1955).

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

PRE-HISTORY & PROTO-HISTORY

Palaeolithic Period

"No fossil remains of Pleistocene Man have so far been found in Eastern India. . . . However, the presence of Pleistocene Man in India is known from the chipped stone tools left behind by him and discovered in many localities. . . . Though various types of palaeolithic implements have been found here, yet their exact relationship and the environmental background under which they were manufactured, are questions that remain to be answered."[1]

As early as in 1865, V. Ball, the celebrated geologist, reported the finding of a number of palaeolithic implements made of gneiss and quartzite in sites in Purulia, Bankura and Burdwan districts. Besides various small tools, he found a hand-axe made of green quartzite in the village Kunkune,[2] "11 miles south-west of Govindapur on the Grand Trunk Road."[3] In 1867, Ball discovered another palaeolithic tool, made of quartzite, near the village Gopinathpur, 11 miles SSW of Biharinath hill in Bankura district.[4]

In 1959-60, the Exploration Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India, under the leadership of V. D. Krishnaswami, undertook an intensive exploration in parts of the districts of Purulia and Bankura along the river Kangsabati and its affluents, the Kumari and the Jam, concentrating its attention in an area of about 10,240 hectares (40 sq. miles) shortly to go under the reservoir of the Kangsabati Project which resulted in some interesting finds.[5]

Another exploration carried out in the district in 1962 under the leadership of D. Sen of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Calcutta, principally in the Dwarakeswar valley immediately to the south-west of Bankura town, also unearthed many palaeolithic tools and implements.[6] The sites probed by the two parties overlapped occasionally.

The places explored for artefacts by the above expeditions may

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[1] A. H. Dani—Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India. Calcutta, 1960, p. 17.

[2] Sen, Ghosh & Chatterjee, authors of 'Palaeolithic Industry of Bankura', referred to below, placed this village in Bankura district.

[3] V. Ball—'Stone Implements Found in Bengal', in Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1865. pp. 127-28.

[4] V. Ball—'Note on Stone Implements Found in Bengal', in Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867. p. 143.

[5] V. D. Krishnaswami—Indian Archaeology 1959-60—A Review. New Delhi, 1960, pp. 48-50.

[6] D. Sen, A. K. Ghosh & M. Chatterjee—'Palaeolithic Industry of Bankura, West Bengal', in Man in India, Vol. 43, 1963. pp. 100-13.

be geographically grouped into two regions. The first lies in the valley of the Kangsabati and the Kumari where palaeoliths have been discovered from the villages of Ambikānagar, Hātikhedā, Chiādā, Baddih, Puddih, Paresnāth, Sāreṅgarh, Mukuṭmanipur, Bheduā, Basantapur and Kājalkurā. In the other region, lying in the Dwarakeswar valley to the south and south-west of Bankura town, implements have been discovered from the villages of Āijtā, Bhutsahar, Dhaldāngā, Dāmodarpur, Manjurā, Upārsol, Krishnanagar, Nuniābād and Chikchikā.

Special mention may be made of a unifacial chopper of a type belonging to the early palaeolithic period, found by Krishnaswami in a thick and extensive deposit at Upārsol, close to Bankura town. Sen and others discovered two crude choppers from the same place. A partly bifacial chopper was also recovered from a section of the detrital lateritic gravels. Near the ninth milestone on the new Bankura-Khatra road, a hand-axe (biface) was collected from the village Chikchikā. Another hand-axe (biface) was found, a mile further down, near the village Nuniābād. Detrital laterite (pebbly) occurs in both the localities. Krishnanagar, a village on the southern bank of the Dwarakeswar, three miles (five kilometres) from Bankura town, yielded a scraper. Hatikheda, in the Kumari valley, proved to be a very interesting site where a number of hand-axes (mainly ovate), some with crude pebble-butts, as also a few unifacial and partly bifacial choppers and scrapers were found in laterite pits and from open sites on gravels making their exact archaeological position uncertain. Most of the choppers, scraper and clevers found in these sites were of quartzite. Hand-axes were also of the same material.

The bedrock in this area is composed of schistose granitic gneiss of the Archaean Age. Above it lie laterites and/or laterites with gravel. Sometimes, the lateritic level is capped by a layer of alluvial deposits. Most of the palaeoliths found in Bankura come from the stratum where laterites are mixed with a fair amount of gravel. In 1942, J. A. Dunn and A. K. Dey[1] observed the alluvium and the laterites overlying older rocks and dated them as belonging to the Recent and Pleistocene ages respectively. But this does not lead us very far.

On the basis of typology and method of manufacture,[2] the collected materials have been grouped as belonging to an early period (implements found in Hatikheda, Chiada, Baddih and Uparsol) and as belonging to a later period (those found in Ambikanagar, Paresnath, Sarengarh, Bhedua and Kajalkura etc.). Implements found in

[1] J. A. Dunn & A. K. Dey—'The Geology and Petrology of Eastern Singhbhum', in the Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India, Vol. 69, Part II. 1942.

[2] Hallam L. Movius, Jr.—'Old World Prehistory: Palaeolithic', in Anthropology Today, ed.—A. L. Kroeber, shorter version re-edited by Sol Tax, Chicago 1962.

Chiada and Damodarpur distinctly exhibit Early Acheulian workmanship and they occur with hand-axes. Implements found in Aijta and Manjura exhibit earlier Abbevellio-Acheulian technique. All these would lead us to assume that man lived in Bankura in the Pleistocene Age.

Neolithic Period: Microlithic industry

The discovery of microliths in Bankura district was first reported by Haran Chandra Chakladar in 1952.[1] Between 1954 and 1957 excavations were carried out by B. B. Lal,[2] the then Superintendent of the Eastern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, in the neighbourhood of the D. V. C. colony at Durgapur, along both banks of the Damodar river. The excavations were conducted in the villages of Birbhānpur and Malāngdighi in Burdwan district and in the village of Dejuri in Bankura district, about 13 km. (8 miles) from Durgapur on the Durgapur-Bankura road. Lal observed that the microlithic industry in all these sites was identical. Summing up the evidence, he says: "The surface collection from Birbhanpur (and other sites) included a large number of blades, lunates, points, borers, burins and scrapers but only one example of a trapeze and a doubtful example of a triangle. In the excavated trenches, however, no triangle or trapeze was found, although all the other types were found. While one should not set aside the single specimen of trapeze and the doubtful example of triangle, even though found on the surface, one cannot, at the same time, say with any degree of certainty that these two types did form regular constituents of Birbhanpur microlithic industry. Thus, pending further investigation of the issue, all that may be said for the present is that the industry seems to be essentially non-geometric.[3] Another noteworthy feature of this industry is the absence of any associated pottery.[4] . . . Still another noteworthy point about the industry is the absence of the 'crested ridge'--a feature so typical of the microlithic industries of the chalcolithic[5] period."[6] Observing on the finds, Lal comes to the tentative conclusion that the microlithic industry of Bankura is pre-Harappan.[7]

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[1] H. C. Chakladar—'The Prehistoric Culture of Bengal', in Man in India, Vol. XXXI, 1952. pp. 124-64.

[2] B. B Lal—'Birbhanpur, a Microlithic Site in the Damodar Valley', in Ancient India, No. 14, 1958.

[3] According to V. Gordon Childe ('Archaeological Ages as Technological [illegible]', in Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol LXXIV, 1944), [illegible] of Chalcolithic period show distinct geometric shapes and stone artefacts are found in association with copper.

[4] According to V. G. Childe, again, (Man Makes Himself: Pelican, London) [illegible] cultures, so far discovered, are all associated with the existence of [illegible].

[5] V. G. Childe, in his article on 'Old World Prehistory: Neolithic', in Anthro-[illegible] Today, edited by A. L. Kroeber, shorter version, edited by Sol Tax. [illegible], 1962, proposed that Chalcolithic should be included within the spectrum of [illegible] Age.

[6] B. B. Lal—op. cit. p. 35, quoted by A. H. Dani in Prehistory and Protohistory of [illegible] India. Calcutta, 1960. pp. 37-38.

[7] [illegible] cit.

Krishnaswami also discovered a large number of microlithic tools and implements from 24 places situated either in the Kangsabati-Kumari or in the Dwarakeswar basins. Of the sites where microliths were found, the following yielded both palaeolithic and microlithic artefacts: Ambikanagar, Chiada, Baddih, Pareshnath, Sarengarh, Mukutmanipur, Bhedua, Basantapur and Kajalkura. Microliths in association with Neolithic artefacts were noticed only in Kurkuṭiā in Khatra police station. Microliths alone were discovered in the following places: Puddih (a Calcutta University expedition later recovered some palaeoliths from this place), Kānṭākumāri, Balarāmpur, Kutulbāri, Kāmārkuli, Budhpur, Gorābāri, Jhānṭipāhāri, Tumān, Sātsol, Luṭiā, Maisāmurā, Nilgiri and Bardā. Most of these places are either situated on the banks of the Kangsabati in Khatra police station, e.g. Maisamura, Bhedua, Lutia, Kendua, Tuman, Jhantipahari, Kajalkura, Basantapur, Mukutmanipur and Gorabari or are situated on the banks of the Kumari in Ranibandh police station, e.g. Bhengardih, Bānskeṭiā, Budhpur, Kānṭāgorā, Kantakumari, Sarengarh, Pareshnath, Chiada and Ambikanagar.

All these tools were found at the junction of red alluvium, the Archaean bedrock and modern greyish loam. Pottery of any variety was conspicuous by its absence.[1]

Neolithic industry proper

According to Haran Chandra Chakladar, the Neolithic culture of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa is represented by surface finds of ground tools, pottery and remnants of husks and cereals testifying to the existence of cultivation.[2]

A Neolithic artefact, presumably[3] from the Kangsabati valley in Bankura district, was first reported by H. C. Chakladar in 1952. V. D. Krishnaswami, in his report on the explorations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1959-60, referred to neoliths discovered during an earlier exploration at Pareshnath, where some microliths were again discovered by him and his party.[4] Of the three neoliths found, two tiny celts, characteristic of eastern India, were of particular interest. Both were smoothed and polished

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[1] Indian Archaeology—A Review, 1959-60. p. 50.

[2] H. C. Chakladar—'Prehistoric Culture of Bengal', in Man in India, Vols. XXI, 1941, pp. 208-36; XXII, 1942, pp. 140-62 & XXXI, 1952, pp. 124-64.

V. G. Childe in his article entitled 'Old World Prehistory', in Anthropology Today, edited by A. L. Kroeber, re-edited by Sol Tax (shorter version) and published by the Chicago University Press in 1960, says that since the geological (that is association with a Recent, as against a Pleistocene, fauna) and technological (that is the edging of cutting tools by grinding and polishing instead of mere chipping or flaking) criteria of determining the Neolithic culture do not coincide, a new definition of Neolithic based on the third or economic criteria, i.e. evidence of domestication of animals and cultivation of plants should be attempted and he comes to the definition—"Neolithic means a self-sufficing food-producing economy."

[3] H. C. Chakladar—1952, loc. cit. "Presumably", because Chakladar has only referred to the find but has not given any detailed description about the place of recovery.

[4] V. D. Krishnaswami—'Report of Exploration', in Indian Archaeology 1959-60—A Review, edited by A. Ghosh. New Delhi. p. 50.

at the working-edge and were triangular in shape with a roughly oblong transverse section. The third neolith was re-worked after use. The material, in all the three cases, was phyllitic schist.[1] None of the neolithic sites of the district have so far yielded remnants of cereals or bones of domestic animals.

While trying to fix a chronology of these pre-historic tools, and particularly of the surface finds, a note of warning, sounded by A. H. Dani, calls for special attention. He says that the probability of existence of communities of people in the Neolithic stage of development at a later historical period is not purely hypothetical. "Actual evidence (to this effect) has been produced by the excavations carried out at Bhiṭā, near Allahabad by John Marshall and at Bāngarh in Dinājpur district by K. G. Goswami. Marshall observes, 'A singularly interesting problem is presented by the discovery in this house of Nāga as well as in several other buildings on the site, of a number of celts and other neolithic implements of slate, sandstone and diabase. They were found in the Kushāna (2nd century A.D.) and Early and Late Mediaeval strata, and there can be no mistake as to the people to which they belong.' (Marshall, 1911-12, p. 35). At Bāngarh, the implement was found in a layer which was considered to be just below the Suṅga level (2nd-1st century B.C.) (K. G. Goswami, 1948). These discoveries attest the prevalence of the use of ground tools in this region up to a very late historical time."[2] Dani's warning assumes added significance in connexion with the above pre-historic finds in Bankura, all of which were unearthed from sites that are still populated primarily by tribal people having a backward economy in a developmental context.

Ancient Period

Earliest literary references to the area

The earliest reference to the country of which Bankura now forms a part is found in the *Jaina Āchārāṅga Sutra*.[3] The *Sutra* tradition, according to some scholars, dates from the 6th or the 5th century B.C., i.e. approximately from the time of Vardhamāna Mahāvira, it being assumed that parts of it were written around the 3rd century B.C.[4] According to this first book of the Jain scriptures, the 24th Tirthaṅkara Mahāvira travelled in Subba (=Suhma)-bhumi and Vajja (=Vajra)-bhumi in the country of the Lāḍhas (=Rāḍhas). The country was pathless and rugged, the terrain was heavily forested, villages were situated far apart and the people were inhospitable. They would not give any alms to monks but would incite instead fierce dogs after them.

During the period under review, Lāḍh(a) or Rāḍh(a) was more or less a socio-cultural geographic concept with not a very well-defined

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[1] V. D. Krishnaswami—loc. cit.

[2] A. H. Dani—op. cit. p. 86.

[3] Āchārāṅga Sutra—tr. into Bengali by Hirakumari. Swetāmbar Jain Mahāmandal, Calcutta.

[4] H. Jacobi—Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXII.

set of boundaries, like what it is now, or even what it was between the 9th and the 13th centuries A.D. when the terms *Uttara* Rāḍh *Mandala* or *Dakshina* Rāḍh *Mandala* tended to assume politico-geographic meanings with more or less definite boundaries. According to some later commentators of the *Āchārānga Sutra*, Vajja- or Vajra-bhumi had its capital at Panita-bhumi. The name Vajra-bhumi, 'Land of Diamonds', reminds one of *Sarkār* Madāran of Abul Fazl's *Āin-i-Ākbari*, where there was a diamond mine.[1] This *Sarkār* of a much later date corresponds to parts of the modern Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly districts. The 'Land of Diamonds' may have extended as far as Kokhrā on the borders of Bihar, which was famous for its diamond mines in the days of Emperor Jehangir. Suhmas are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as well as in the early Buddhist texts. The epic distinguishes the Suhmas from the people of Tamluk. But *Dasakumāracharita* includes Dāmalipta (Tāmralipta or Tamluk) in the Suhma country. *Pavanaduta* of Dhoyi of the 12th century, places the Suhma country on the Ganges. The details to which attention is invited by several writers, point to the Triveni-Saptagrām-Pānduā area in the Hooghly district as the heart of the Suhma country. *Digvijayprakāsa*, a text of a much later date, excludes the 'Land of Diamonds' from that part of Rāḍh which was known as Suhma.[2]

Susunia Inscription: Gupta Age

The earliest epigraphic evidence relating to the ancient history of the district is contained in a short inscription on the stone wall of a cave in the Susunia hill about 19 km. (12 miles) NW of Bankura town.[3] The inscription, consisting of three lines, has two of the lines inscribed below the design of a big wheel with flaming rib and hub. The third line appears to the right of the wheel. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit and the script is the Eastern variety of the Gupta alphabet. Palaeographically, the script bears a close resemblance to that of the inscription on the iron pillar found at Meherauli in the outskirts of Delhi and also with the script of the Allahabad *Prashasti* of Samudragupta. From this and other evidences, the inscription has been ascribed to the 4th century A.D.[4] The inscription reads: "Chakrasvāmina dāsāgrenātisrista Puskaranādhipate Mahārāja Shri Siṁhavarmanasya putra Mahārāja Shri Chandravarmana driti,"[5] which means—the function or the institution is being performed or dedicated by the chief of the servants of the Lord with discus, king Chandravarmā, the son of king Siṁhavarmā. Another reading of the inscription deciphers the last name as Siddhavarmā.[6]

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[1] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. pp. 20-22.
[2] ibid. pp. 9-10.
[3] B. C. Sen—Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal. University of Calcutta, 1942. pp. 200-07.
[4] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 45.
[5] Nagendranath Basu—'*Mahārāj Chandravarmā*,' in *Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā*, Vol. III. p. 269.
[6] B. C. Sen—loc. cit.

There had been much controversy about the identification of Chandravarmana of the Susunia inscription. It is, however, commonly agreed that the king Simhavarmana flourished towards the end of the 3rd century A.D. and his son Chandravarmana's reign commenced around the beginning of the 4th century A.D.[1] As the title 'Pushkaranādhipati' suggests, Chandravarmana was apparently the king of a place called Pushkaranā. Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasad Sastri, who discovered the inscription, suggested that Chandravarmana of the Susunia inscription be identified with the brother of Naravarmana of the Varmana family of Malwa mentioned in the Māndāsor inscription and Pushkarana be identified with the town of Pokharan in Rajasthan but he could not explain why the Susunia hill in Bankura district should be chosen as the site for one of his inscriptions. Moreover, it is generally agreed that the Varmanas of Malwa did not extend their domains beyond the eastern limits of Rajasthan.[2] In 1927-28, K. N. Dikshit of the Archaeological Survey of India carried out an investigation and suggested an alternative identification of Pushkarana,[3] which has since been generally accepted by scholars. According to him, "at a distance of less than 25 miles to the north-east of Susunia is an ancient village named Pokharan[4] on the south bank of the river Damodar. It is still a considerably large village and its antiquity is attested by the fact that the houses in several quarters of the village are built on top of the mounds, formed by the ruined heaps of older habitations. ... In the western extremity of the village, exists a large mound called the 'Rājgarh' strewn over with broken bricks, pottery pieces and other antiquities. Several architectural stones are to be seen in the village. ... a stone kept in the open yard of a house shows the 'sow and ass' figure familiar from its occurrence on land grants. There are several small tanks in the vicinity of a large tank (*pokhar* or *pushkara*) in the west of the village and the name Pokharan or Pushkarana must doubtless be ultimately due to the presence of such a tank in ancient times. It is very likely that the place dates back from the early Gupta period and can thus be considered to be the Pushkarana of the Susunia inscription, the capital of king Chandravarmana, son of Simhavarmana, the extent of whose dominions may have been more or less coterminous with the ancient Rāḍha country of south-west Bengal."[5] This would tend to prove that Chandravarmana's family originated in Bankura district. One scholar[6] has gone to the extent of suggesting that Pushkarana can easily be changed to Bākkurān, a

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[1] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 45.
[2] Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XIII. p. 133.
[3] K. N. Dikshit—'The Identification of Pushkarana Mentioned in the Susunia Inscription of Chandravarmana', in Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1927-28. Delhi, 1931.
[4] The name of the place is now locally pronounced as Pākhānnā.—Ed.
[5] K. N. Dikshit—op. cit.
[6] D. R. Bhandarkar—Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. I. p. 265.

name which, he holds, has survived in the modern form of 'Bankura'. But it is perhaps straining philology too much.[1]

An inscription engraved on an iron pillar at Meherauli, near the Qutb Minār in Delhi, mentions, among other things, military exploits of a king called Chandra, who extirpated in battle in the Vanga country his enemies who offered him a united resistance. Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Sastri identified this Chandra of Meherauli Iron Pillar with the brother of Naravarmana of Malwa mentioned in the Māndāsor inscription who, he thought, was the same person as Chandra of the Susunia inscription. Two possible objections can be raised against such an assumption, one of which has already been stated. The second objection is that while it may be assumed that the Chandra referred to in the Meherauli inscription died in full enjoyment of his glory, there is a reasonable ground to believe that Chandravarmana of the Susunia inscription suffered defeat and died in ignominy.[2] The only plausible point of similarity between the Chandra of Meherauli inscription and Chandravarmana of the Susunia inscription is that both were great warriors who carried their victorious arms to the Vanga country. R. C. Majumdar emphatically asserts that Chandravarmana of Pushkarana "extended his dominions as far as the Faridpur district (in East Bengal). For the protection of the newly acquired territory he founded a fortress styled Chandravarmana-koṭa."[3]

Some scholars have tried to identify king Chandra of the Meherauli Iron Pillar inscription with Chandragupta I[4] and have stated that the Chandravarmana of the Susunia rock inscription was no other than the first of the imperial Guptas. If this hypothesis be correct, the need for Samudragupta, son of Chandragupta I, to wage war against the kings of Bengal to annex their territories to the Gupta empire becomes superfluous. The only answer that can perhaps be provided against this sort of criticism is that though Chandragupta I defeated some of the kings of the Vanga country, he could not successfully bring their territories under Gupta suzerainty or even if he did, the annexation was short-lived and that it rested with Samudragupta to extend Gupta hegemony over considerable portions of Bengal. This identification of Chandragupta I with Chandra of the Meherauli Iron Pillar inscription and Chandravarmana of Pushkarana seems hardly plausible on the ground that no known Gupta record mentions of these exploits of Chandragupta I.

The great conqueror Samudragupta, more than any other person before him, brought most portions of northern India under one imperial authority. Among the kings of Āryāvarta uprooted by

[1] B. C. Sen—op. cit. pp. 200-07.
[2] loc. cit.
[3] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 30.
[4] ibid. p. 48.

him, the Allahabad *Prashasti* names one Chandravarmana, whom Samudragupta defeated and probably slew. This Chandravarmana may reasonably be identified with the king of that name mentioned in the Susunia inscription as the ruler of Pushkarana. It can be said with a degree of certainty that with the defeat and death of Chandravarmana, his territories were annexed to the Gupta empire. The list given in the *Prashasti*, according to its author Harisena himself, was not an exhaustive one. The fact that Chandravarmana has been assigned a place in this record shows that he was not merely a petty local chief. Beyond this information, any further details about the extent of Chandravarmana's or his father's domains are necessarily very speculative.[1]

A second record found in the Susunia hill consists of a single-line inscription. The character of the script is the same as that of the first inscription already referred to. K. N. Dikshit read the inscription as "*Chakrasvāmino(e) Dhosāgrāmo-tisrishtah*" which means that the vilage Dhosāgrāma was made over to Chakraswāmi.[2] This inscription throws significant light on an aspect of the social practices of the time. Nīharranjan Ray in his *Bāṅgāleer Itihās* has noticed a tendency by the empire-builders of ancient India to settle Brahmins in rent-free lands around their capital sites. The above reference to the donation of a village to the deity Chakraswāmi conforms to that usage. In actual practice, a gift made to a deity was always meant to be used by Brahmins in service of the deity.

The Susunia inscription also furnishes the earliest record of Vishnu worship in Bengal. *Chakraswāmin* (the wielder of the discus) is a well-known name of Vishnu and it is more than apparent that king Chandravarmana, who has been mentioned as the chief of the servants of *Chakraswāmi*, was a worshipper of Vishnu. It may also be assumed that the king's religion was professed by the more influential sections of contemporary society, if not by the majority. The representation of the *chakra* or the discus on the wall of the cave probably indicates that it was originally intended to be used as a temple of Vishnu.[3]

A sixth century land grant found in the village Mallasarul in Galsi police station of the neighbouring Burdwan district records the name of one Mahārājā Vijay Sen, an Uparika or Viceroy of Vardhamānabhukti under Mahārājādhirāja Gopachandra, who, in all probability, was not a vassal of any Imperial Gupta, tending to prove thereby that by the sixth century A.D., Gupta power was on the wane in the southern districts of Bengal.[4]

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[1] Ramesh Chandra Majumdar—*Bānglā Desher Itihās*, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1373 B.S. p. 146.
[2] K. N. Dikshit—op. cit. p. 188.
[3] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 400.
[4] Ibid. pp. 51-54.

The rule of Sasāṅka

Some time before 606 A.D. Sasāṅka became the king of Gauḍa with his capital at Karnasuvarna, now identified with Rāṅgāmāṭi-Kānsonāpur near Chiruṭi railway station in Murshidābād district. "There is hardly any doubt that both Northern and Western Bengal were included in the domains of Sasanka. Whether they included also Southern and Eastern Bengal cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. While the distant military expeditions of Sasanka lend colour to the supposition that he must have already conquered the whole of Bengal, there is no positive evidence in support of it. . . . But whatever may be the extent of his rule in Bengal, Sasanka's dominions probably included Magadha from the very beginning."[1] From an inscription found in the village of Soro of Balasore district, N. G. Majumdar has conclusively proved that Uttara Tosāli, which was included within the Odra-visaya, came within the empire of Sasanka Narendra. One of the two copperplate inscriptions of land grant, found in Midnapur[2] and now preserved in the Midnapur Sāhitya Parishad, records that "while Sasanka was ruling the earth, his feudatory Sāmanta Mahārāj Sri Somadatta was governing the province of Dandabhukti[3] joined to Utkala-desa." While all the tracts surrounding the present day Bankura district appear to have been included in Sasanka's empire, it can perhaps be reasonably presumed that his suzerainty also extended over the territory now comprising the Bankura district. But there is no evidence to indicate who were the vassal chiefs in this region or to which *Visaya*, *Bhukti* or *Mandala* the area belonged.

Rāḍh after the death of Sasanka

With the death of Sasanka his empire broke up. Hiuen Tsang, who travelled in Bengal about 638 A.D. shortly after the death of Sasanka, mentions, besides Kajangala (territory around Rājmahal), four kingdoms in Bengal proper, namely Pundravardhana, Karnasuvarna, Samataṭa and Tāmralipti. The first two undoubtedly denote the two component parts of Sasanka's kingdom, namely North Bengal and northern parts of western Bengal including Burdwan, Birbhum, Murshidabad and Nadia districts. The political disintegration of the Gauḍa empire after the death of Sasanka seems to have been referred to in the Buddhist work *ārya-manjusri-mulakalpa* which states—"After the death of Soma (Sasanka) the Gauḍa political system (Gauḍatantra) was reduced to mutual distrust, raised weapons and mutual jealousy—one king for a week; another . . . for a month; then a republican constitution. . . ."[4] In such a state of flux and uncertainty, what political predicament overtook the

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[1] loc. cit.

[2] R. C. Majumdar—Two Copper-Plates of Sasanka from Midnapore. (MS).

[3] Dandabhukti has been identified by scholars with the land "between Orissa and Bengal corresponding to the southern and south-western part of the Midnapore district. The name is said to have survived in modern Dantan in Midnapore district. not far from the river Suvarnarekhā." History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 27.

[4] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. pp. 79-80.

region within the bounds of the present day Bankura district is imponderable. Whether a number of petty chieftains became supreme within their respective domains or whether a portion of the district came under the sway of the neighbouring kingdom of Tamralipti, which, according to Hiuen Tsang, became powerful, are questions that remain to be solved.

Pāla Period

Such anarchical conditions prevailing in Bengal for more than a century came to an end about the middle of the 8th century with the election of Gopāla by the "prakritipunja" (the populace) to end the state of "mātsyanyāya" (the rule of force). Thus began the supremacy of the Pālas in Bengal whose ancestral home was in Barendri in North Bengal. Although in the Monghyr copper-plate of Devapāla, Gopāla is said to have conquered the earth as far as the sea, there is grave doubt if his kingdom extended south of the Damodar river.

When his son Dharmapāla was ruling over Bengal, Sivakara I, the fourth king of the Bhauma-kara dynasty of Utkala, invaded and conquered the Rāḍh country and married Jayāvati, the daughter of the king of Rāḍh.[1] It is not clear which king of the Rāḍh country has been referred to in the inscription. But it may be presumed from later inscriptions of Orissan kings that the related kingdom was not only in southern Rāḍh but was also to the south of the Damodar river. Pala records do not mention of any confrontation of Dharmapala with any Utkala king and the Orissan records, on the other hand, show that Sivakara I did not have to face the Pala power in the process of his conquest of Rāḍh. It may, therefore, be deduced that the Pala empire, until then, did not include lands to the south of the Damodar. Sivakara I's suzerainty over the portions of Bengal he conquered, must have been very short-lived. Dharmapala's son Devapala, on becoming the king, led a victorious expedition against Utkala and thoroughly subjugated that kingdom.[2] During Devapala's reign, between 810 and 850 A.D., the Pala empire reached the height of its glory.

The fame and renown of the Pala empire did not survive for long after the death of Devapala. The rule of his successors was marked by a steady process of decline and disintegration. Utkala must have regained its independence after the death of Devapala, for Suvakara III appears to have established himself there as a powerful monarch. His feudatory king Ranastambha, belonging to the Sulki family of Dhenkānal-Tālcher area, is said to have extended his kingdom up to certain parts of the southern Rāḍh country.[3] It is interesting

[1] Neulpur c. p. of Sivakara I and Tālcher c.p. of Suvakara III cited by H. K. Mahatab in History of Orissa, Vol. I. Cuttack, 1959. p. 134.

[2] Badal Pillar inscription, cited by R. C. Majumdar in History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 117.

[3] Hindol c.p. in Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXIX, pp. 18-28, cited by Mahatab op. cit. p. 147.

to note that people still exist in Midnapur and south-west Bankura who have Sulki as their surnames. The Jāragrām copper-plate inscription also refers to a donation of land in the village Jāra, made by Ranastambha, to a Brahmin named 'Pāchuka' in the Rāḍh country (Rāḍh Mandala).[1]

The reign of Nārāyanpāla, the fifth king of the Pala dynasty, witnessed a series of conflicts with the Rāstrakutas, the Kalachuris and the Chandellas of Central India. Chandella king Dhaṅga, who ascended the throne some time before 954 A.D. and ruled till about 1000 A.D., was a contemporary of Gopāla II, Vigrahapāla II and Mahipāla II. He is said to have conquered Rāḍh and Aṅga and imprisoned the queens of the fallen monarchs.[2] In Kalachuri records we find reference to expeditions against Bengal by two successive Kalachuri kings, Yuvarāja I and his son Lakshmanarāja, who probably ruled in the second and third quarters of the 10th century A.D. Yuvarāja is said to have made amorous contacts with the women of Gauḍa, Karnāṭa, Lāṭa, Kāsmira and Kaliṅga.[3] This may be sycophantic exaggeration by a court poet. But "reference in Kalachuri and Chandella inscriptions to the various component parts of the (Pala) kingdom such as Aṅga, Rāḍha, Gauḍa and Vāṅgāla as separate units may not be without significance."[4] Such references may as well prove that the above principalities really existed as independent or semi-independent kingdoms.

When Mahipāla I succeeded his father Vigrahapāla II about 988 A.D., the prospects of the Pala kingdom were very gloomy indeed. By heroic efforts, however, he succeeded in restoring the fortunes of his family to a considerable extent. Mahipāla I recovered North and East Bengal within three years of his accession but there is no positive evidence to show that he also conquered the western or the southern parts of Bengal. Some light is thrown on this question by the account of Rājendra Chola's invasion of Bengal which requires a somewhat detailed discussion.

The northern expedition of the great Chola emperor lasted for about two years from 1021 to 1023 A.D.[5] A Chola inscription states that after conquering Odda-vishaya (Orissa) and Kosalāi-nādu, the Cholas seized—"Tandabutti, . . . after having destroyed Dharmapāla (in) a hot battle; Takkanalāḍam whose fame reached (all) directions (and which he occupied) after having forcibly attacked Ranasura; Vāgālā-desa, where the rain water never stopped, ... after having been pleased to frighten the strong Mahipāla on the field

[1] Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. IV, pp. 168-71, cited by H. K. Mahatab, op. cit. p. 147.

[2] Khājurāho Ins., No. ii, verse 23; No. iv, verse 46 (Epigraphia Indica, i, 126, 132, 145), cited in History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. pp. 132-33.

[3] Bilhari Ins., V, 24 (Epi. Indica, i, 256, 265), cited in History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 132.

[4] *History of Bengal*, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 133.

[5] K. N. Nilkanta Sastri—The Colas, 247ff.

of hot battle with the (noise of the) conches (got) from the deep sea; Uttiralāḍam (on the shore of) the expansive ocean (producing) pearls; and the Gangā whose waters bearing fragrant flowers dashed against the bathing places."[1]

There can be no doubt that Tandabuṭṭi, Takkanalāḍam, Uttiralāḍam and Vāgālā-desa in the above passage denote respectively Dandabhukti, Dakshina-Rāḍh, Uttara-Rāḍh and Vāngālā. It has been reasonably inferred from the inscription quoted above that the Cholas attacked and overthrew Dharmapala of Dandabhukti, Ranasura of southern Rāḍh and Govindachandra of Vangala, in that order, before they fought with Mahipala and conquered Uttara-Rāḍh. It is not definitely stated that Mahipala was the ruler of Uttara-Rāḍh, though that seems to be the implication, as no separate ruler of this kingdom is mentioned.[2] The account seems to prove that Dandabhukti, Dakshin-Rāḍh and Vangala were independent of Pāla supremacy or were semi-independent kingdoms at the time of the Chola invasion. Dandabhukti could not have been ruled by a feudatory of Mahipala, since we know that a few decades back it came to be included within the domains of Kāmboja-rāj Nayapāla. Dharmapala of Dandabhukti might have been a scion of the Kamboja family. Ranasura of Dakshin-Rāḍh must have been a ruler belonging to the Sura family of Mandāra, identified with Mā(n)dāran of Arambagh subdivision in Hooghly district.[3] Whether the Sura kings were vassals of the Palas cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty. Tracts included in the present-day Bankura district might have existed beyond the outer boundaries of the Dandabhukti and Mandaran kingdoms. One cannot, however, be too sure whether these neighbouring kingdoms included any areas of the modern Bankura district or extended their suzerainty over small chieftains and feudatories who might have been ruling over the jungle-covered Bankura territories.

Independent and semi-independent principalities in southern Rāḍh in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries

Some evidence, collected from sources not necessarily political, are, however, extant which would tend to prove that there were independent and semi-independent principalities in the Dwarakeswar and Kangsabati river valleys in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries with more or less stable polities. These principalities might not have been too prosperous to attract the notice of neighbouring powers nor perhaps were they powerful enough to challenge the might of others. Protected and isolated by difficult terrain and deep forests,

[1] The translation of Prof. Sastri differs to some extent from the translation given by Hultzsch (Epigraphia Indica, IX, p. 233) in respect of Uttiralāḍam. Hultzsch's translation reads: "Uttiralāḍam, as rich in pearls as the ocean" or alternatively "Uttiralāḍam, close to the pearl producing ocean." Both of these translations seem more probable than Prof. Sastri's on geographical [illegible].

[2] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943, pp. 137-39.

[3] Mandāra has been identified with Sarkār Mādāran of *Āin-i-Ākbari*, locally called Māndāran.

they, nevertheless, thrived in their own small way and developed distinct characters of their own.

Evidence of temples

Along the course of the Dwarakeswar river, there still exist at Sonātopal, Bahulāḍā, Dihar and Deulbhiryā a number of fairly large temples, in varying stages of dilapidation, which the archaeologists ascribe to the 10th, 11th or 12th centuries A.D. Besides these extant edifices, there is unmistakable evidence of large shrines once standing at Te-deuli, Dharāpāṭ, Rāutārā, Laer, Rādhānagar, Saldā, Joypur and Moynāpur which were constructed probably between the 10th and the 16th centuries A.D. The Kangsabati and the Kumari river valleys similarly yielded several important sites at Kenduā, Chitgiri, Loādi and Pareshnāth which once contained temples of considerable size according to the explorations carried on in this region by V. D. Krishnaswami of the Archaeological Survey of India who ascribed them to the 12th and the 13th centuries A.D.[1]

In mediaeval Bengal local chiefs, feudatory rajas, big landowners and prosperous traders were the main temple builders. It can be safely assumed that the people who commissioned and maintained such big and ornate temples as those mentioned above were not men of small means or influence. There are strong reasons to believe that the feudatory chiefs who built such large structures enjoyed within their respective domains some sort of political and administrative stability without which such ambitious and protracted ventures could not have been undertaken. The fact that many of the shrines were built with laterite and not with the easily available brick supports this conclusion inasmuch as the former material was hard to obtain locally and had to be quarried and transported from distant places involving not only prodigious expenses but also considerable time. A stable polity alone would encourage such prolonged efforts.

The presumption that merchants built some of these temples, leads us to an interesting aspect of contemporary social milieu. The presumption presupposes the existence of a flourishing trading community in a number of centres for several centuries to sustain the temple building (and maintaining) activities. Among the *Sankha-vanik* (conch-shell merchants) and the *Tāmbuli-vanik* (betel-leaf and betel-nut merchants) castes of West Bengal there are geographical septs known as the *Rājhāṭi-sreni*, after the village Birsinghapur-Rājhāṭ, supposed to be a very old one. This village by the Dwarakeswar river in Onda police station must have once been a flourishing centre of conch-shell and betel products trade to support a large population of prosperous Sānkhāris and Tāmbulis.[2] It is

[1] Indian Archaeology 1959-60—A Review. New Delhi, 1960. pp. 48-50.

[2] Prosperous Tāmbulis of present times residing in Purulia and in Chhatna, Indpur and Bankura thanas of Bankura district chiefly belong to the *Rājhāṭi-sreni*.

claimed that Birsinghapur-Rajhat was also an important centre of *tussar*-silk export and salt import. There is besides a standard measurement used in Bankura district known as the *Rājhāṭi-pāi*. Although all this would go to establish the one-time prosperity of this village, it is not certain if it dates back from the 10th or the 11th century A.D.

Whoever might have been the actual commissioners of these temples—feudatory chiefs or traders—one thing is certain that the continuity in style that we find in these temples and in the temple-building and maintaining activities could not have been sustained without some sort of political stability and continuity under local rulers. Trade and commerce too could not have flourished had there not been some political stability and security.

Temple building activity in an area as backward as the Bankura region of the past might also be viewed as a process towards Aryanization. That this tendency had always influenced the autochthonous chiefs is testified by the history of the Vishnupur royal family itself. Besides, the fact that architecturally most of the ancient temples of Bankura belong to the Orissan version of the North Indian *Nāgara-Sikhara* tradition is a further confirmation of that tendency towards Aryanization.

Settling Brahmins with land grants or the like for carrying on temple services had been another practice with the autochthonous chiefs that helped the process of Aryanization. That this practice was prevalent in the Dwarakeswar valley is evident from the existence of numerous old Brahmin settlements along the course of this river as also along the south bank of the Damodar. Brahmins are, in fact, now numerically strongest among the upper Hindu castes in this district populated mainly by the Bauris, Bagdis and Santals, among others. But the most boastful Brahmin in the oldest Brahmin settlement would not claim a descent of more than fifteen generations. And this should not cause any surprise as, up to the 12th century A.D., the most widely practised religion of the North Indian tradition in Bankura region was neither Brahminism nor Buddhism, but Jainism.

Jainism in Bankura

The considered opinion of an authority of the eminence of Ramkrishnagopal Bhandarkar that 'Prāchyadesa' (literally, "the eastern country", which comprised practically the whole of West Bengal including the present district of Bankura) was Aryanized by Jainism is now universally accepted by scholars. In the remote past, when the Bankura region was inaccessibly covered with forests and isolated from the rest of the country, Jainism made its first proselytising incursions here from its strongholds immediately to the west located in and around the ancient kingdom of Magadha. The researches of Jacobi have clearly established that the old Jain text, *Achārānga Sutra*, was written, in most parts, prior to

the 3rd century B.C. This text relates that the Jain pontiff Vardhamāna Mahāvira travelled extensively in Subbabhumi, Vajjabhumi and Lāḍh (all in 'Prāchyadesha') and found the local people far from civilized who threw stones and set dogs upon him. That 'Lāḍh' of the *Āchārāṅga Sutra* is the same as the Rāḍh country of the present day (which includes the district of Bankura) is beyond doubt. The Aryan Hindu ways of life reached these remote tracts at a much later date but the first waves of Aryan civilization reached its shores, through Mahavira and his followers, five or six centuries before the Christian era when Mahavira is supposed to have lived. Probodh Chandra Bagchi, the noted scholar on ancient Jainism, has stated that even with such inglorious beginnings as were experienced by Mahavira, Jainism was able to entrench itself in Bengal as early as the 3rd century B.C.[1] That this faith held great sway in this region towards the middle of the 7th century A.D. is testified by Hiuen Tsang, the celebrated Chinese traveller, who visited this part of the country about that time. The Jain texts *Jainakalpasutra*, *Bodhisattāvadānakalpalatā* etc. speak of Pondavaddhana (the present-day Mahāsthāngarh in Bogra district of East Pakistan), Koṭivarsha (modern Bāngarh in the Dinajpur district of East Pakistan) and Tāmralipti (modern Tamluk in Midnapur district of West Bengal) as important centres of Jainism. The far-flung location of these places is sufficient to prove the one-time omnipresence of the Jaina faith in Bengal.

Jainism continued to flourish till the Palas came to rule this part of the country. They being avowed Buddhists, the erstwhile ubiquitous Jainism had necessarily to recede from these areas, e.g. North Bengal, where their supremacy was unquestioned. It is, however, doubtful if the Palas exercised any concrete influence in the regions south of the Ajay river in Bengal which, in effect, meant that Buddhism, professed and patronized by the ruling dynasty, had no opportunity to replace Jainism in the Bankura area, south of the Ajay river, where the erstwhile faith continued to prosper till the Sena rulers came upon the scene. The advent of the Senas, whose administration did cover the Bankura area, was not very effective either to displace Jainism summarily. The Senas, who were Brahminical Hindus, were nonetheless very liberal in their religious beliefs and saw no point in ousting by force a religion in which their subjects had believed for ages. But the royal patronage offered by them to Brahminism slowly worked out the effacement of Jainism which did not die a violent death but—because of the social and religious circumstances obtaining then—was gradually absorbed into the wider Brahminical Hindu fold. Very concrete examples of this interesting assimilative process can be cited from

[1] Probodh Chandra Bagchi—'*Baṅgadeshe Jaina Dharmer Prārambha*', in *Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā*, 1346, Vol. I.

several religious centres still extant in Bankura which have been successively used by the Jains and the Hindus alike for the profession of their respective faiths. On the northern slopes of the Biharinath hill (P. S. Saltora) there is a modern Siva temple housing a *lingam*. In its precincts an abraded laterite figure of the Jain pontiff Pārswanātha and a twelve-armed stone image of Vishnu showing marked Jain affinities can still be seen. The iconographic evidence clearly proves that this site, originally used as a Jain centre, passed through an intermediate Jain-Brahminical stage to emerge eventually as a seat of Sivaite worship. The recent temple at Dharāpāṭ, four miles north-west of Vishnupur town and in the same police station, constructed towards the close of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century A.D. for the worship of the Hindu deity Krishna, displays on its outer walls two large Jain images which must have once belonged to an earlier temple now lying in ruins in the vicinity. There is another Pārswanātha image near by which is unmistakably of Jain origin but besides its two original hands two more have been carved out of the back-slab to make it conform to an orthodox image of Vishnu. Here, again, the iconographic materials testify that a religious centre, originally Jain, had passed through an intermediate stage of Vishnu worship and was converted into a site for the veneration of Krishna which became the religious creed of the Malla Rajas of Vishnupur as also of a large section of their subjects from the beginning of the 17th century. The same story is repeated at the famous temple at Bahulara (P. S. Onda) where the presiding deity now is a *lingam* but a large stone image of Parswanatha still reclines on the back wall of the sanctum. The small votive shrines unearthed in the compound of this temple have also been attributed to the Jain faith proving conclusively that Bahulara was once a Jain site which passed into the Brahminical Hindu fold in course of time. It is needless to multiply examples (of which there are many in the district) to prove that before the Brahminical Hindu faith came to be embraced by the people of Bankura in general, Jainism was the common religious creed of the local populace.[1]

From the evidence cited, it may be presumed that the independent or semi-independent rajas who ruled the then jungle-covered regions of modern Bankura in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries and the traders who commissioned some of the temples subscribed to the Jain faith.

The Kaivarta revolution of Bhim and Dibyok in Barendri against Pala rule, consequent dispossession of Rāmapāla and subsequent recovery of Barendri by Ramapala (1077-1120 A.D.) have been described in details in the contemporary Sanskrit text *Rāmacharita* of Sandhyā-

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[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. pp. 64-79.

karanandi.[1] In order to regain his kingdom, Ramapala literally travelled from door to door to enlist the support of powerful chiefs, many of whom were formerly and some were still nominally his vassals. By lavish offer of land and wealth he was able to persuade a number of these chiefs in possession of well-equipped forces to come to his side. The detailed list of those independent or semi-independent rulers given in *Rāmacharita* and annotated by a contemporary commentator is of great historical importance. This list provides a vivid and interesting picture of the political dismemberment of Bengal caused by the decline of the authority of the Palas.[2] The list includes the name of one "Vīraguna, king of Koṭāṭabī in the south", described as a "Kanṭhirab", who had distinguished himself as "Dakshinsimhāsanchakravartī". Nalinikanta Bhattashali, Jogeschandra Roy Vidyanidhi and Niharranjan Ray[3] have identified Kotatabi with Koṭeswara, 15 miles east of Vishnupur, although Radhagovinda Basak describes it as a "jungle-kingdom in Orissa, adjacent to Bengal." In the village Dumni, approximately 15 miles north-east of Vishnupur and within Patrasayer police station, there are extensive ruins, spread over an area of one square mile, of what appears to have been a fort. A mile to the east of what was once the eastern gate of the fort is a village of the name of Kākaṭia which bears some resemblance with Koṭāṭabī. The ruins are locally called Dumnigarh.[4] To others in the district, it is known as Korāsurgarh.[5] Any attempt, however, to form an idea about the extent of Viraguna's kingdom is bound to be very speculative.

Kingdom of Koṭāṭabī

Among eleven other chiefs mentioned in the list of Ramapala's confederates, mention should be made of Jayasimha, king of Dandabhukti, Lakshmisura, the lord of Apāra-Mandāra[6] and head of the group of "feudal chiefs of the forest" (*samast-aṭā-vika-sāmanta-chakra-chuḍāmani*) and Rudrasikhara, the ruler of Tailakampi.[7] Whether their dominions included any portions of the modern Bankura district is not definitely known. There is, however, a possibility that the feudal confederacy over which Lakshmisura of Apara-Mandara presided held some parts of the present-day Bankura district.

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[1] Radhagovinda Basak tr. & ed.—*Gauḍakavi Sandhyākaranandi Birachita Rāmacharita* (2nd Edn.). Calcutta, 1330 B.S.

[2] History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. pp. 149-50.

[3] Niharranjan Ray—*Bāṅgālir Itihās, Ādiparva*. Calcutta, 1359 B.S.

[4] Letter dated 7.11.62 from the Secretary, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Vishnupur, to the State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers.

[5] A. Mitra—Census 1951, District Handbook: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. p. 170.

[6] Apāra-Mandāra or Mandāra has been identified with Bhiṭārgarh in Arambagh subdivision of Hooghly near the eastern border of Bankura district.

[7] Identified with Telkupi in Purulia district, now largely under the reservoir of the Panchet Dam of the D.V.C. on the Damodar. The region is still called Sikharbhum perhaps after the royal family. *Āīn-i-Ākbarī* refers to the pargana Shergarh, commonly called Sakharbhum.

After his re-instatement, Ramapala tried to extend his power to the south. His endeavours were facilitated by the help he received from the feudatory chiefs of Rāḍh. He extended his conquests up to Kalinga. Orissa at that time was in a state of political disintegration. The later Ganga kings of Kalinga were then trying to expand their dominions to the north. It appears, however, that Orissa was not finally conquered by the Eastern Ganga king Anantavarman Choḍaganga until 1135 A.D.[1] Till that time, i.e. 1135 A.D., the hapless country remained exposed to attacks from the north. Ramapala and his ally Jayasimha of Dandabhukti led a series of invasions against Orissa resulting in the submission of Somavamsi Kesari, king of Orissa, to the Pala king. But after Ramapala's death when Orissa was conquered by the great Ganga king Anantavarmana Choḍaganga, Somavamsi Kesari was replaced by a nominee of Anantavarmana.[2]

Expedition of the Orissan king Anantavarmana Choḍaganga

Taking advantage of the weakness of Kumarapala, son of Ramapala, who ascended the throne in 1120 A.D., Anantavarmana Choḍaganga attacked Rāḍh some time before 1135 A.D. "The Kenduāpāṭna, Pānjābi Maṭh and the Saṅkarānanda Maṭh c.p. inscriptions reveal that Choḍagaṅga fought with the king of Mandāra on the banks of the Ganges. The Kaliṅga army destroyed the fortifications and gateways of the city of Āramya, the capital of Mandāra kingdom. The king of Mandāra fled from the fort.... There is no doubt about the fact that a large portion of southern Bengal remained under the King of Orissa."[3] One of the inscriptions of Choḍagaṅga mentions that "he exacted tributes from all the lands between the Gaṅgā and the Gotami Gaṅgā (Godāvari)."[4] This is obviously an exaggeration but is not basically unrelated to the extensive authority exercised by the Orissan monarch. From a c.p. inscription of Vaidyadeva, the able minister of Kumarapala, it is clear that he resisted the invasion of Choḍagaṅgadeva. The copper plate refers to the Pala navy's successful campaigns in South Bengal which probably stopped Choḍagaṅga's march beyond southern Rāḍh.

People of Utkala origin in south and south-west Bankura

There is one direct but unverified testimony and some indirect evidence to show that *not only the route of Anantavarmana's army* on its march from Orissa to Mandaran lay through the present district of Bankura but some portions of it were either under his direct control or under the control of his vassals. In the village of Sāreṅgarh, on the Kumari river in Ranibandh police station, there are some mounds which, when dug, yield ancient bricks and local people say that they contain ruins of what was once the fort

[1] Shri-Kurmam Ins. cited by History of Bengal, Vol. I. Dacca, 1943. p. 162.
[2] Ibid. pp. 161-63.
[3] Hare Krushna Mahatab—History of Orissa, Vol. I. Cuttack. pp. 200-01.
[4] Ibid. p. 198.

of Anantavarmana Choḍagaṅga. In the southern and south-western parts of the district, Anantavarmana Choḍagaṅga's name is still a familiar one. People belonging to Utkala Brahmin caste constitute a sizable proportion of the total Brahmin population of the district. In their main concentrations in Simlapal and Indpur police stations, they form the bulk of the local Brahmin population. They are also found within the Taldangra, Raipur and Ranibandh thanas. The villages of Bhutsahar, Mandalgrām, Siuli, Benuchā, Kusmi, Kushbākhrā, Bhādo, Mukundapur, Madhupur-Puipāl, Piṭhābākhrā, Madarā, Lāekpārā, Tāldā, Bikrampur, Māchhatorā, Kesikochā, Pārsolā, Muidharā, Bhālāidihi, Jorshā and Tirābād in Simlapal police station are prominent centres of Utkala Brahmins.[1] It is claimed that the ancestors of these Utkala Brahmins, following the trails of the victorious army of Choḍagaṅga, came and settled in the district. Despite the prevalence of certain legends connecting the Malla family of Vishnupur with the rise of the Simlapal royal house belonging to the Utkala Brahmin caste, it is reasonable to believe that the foundation of the Simlapal Raj in or around 1478 A.D.[2] was preceded by large-scale immigration of Utkala Brahmins into that part of the district.

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Soon a new power rose in Bengal which challenged the supremacy of the Palas in the north and the Eastern Gangas in the south. When the Senas came to be reckoned as the premier political authority in Bengal during the tenure of Vijayasena (1095 or 1125-1157 A.D.), they had already completed more than two generations' residence in the northern Rāḍh region in Bengal. It is now generally assumed that the Karnāṭa-Kshatriya Sena family immigrated into Bengal when one of their ancestors took up service under the Palas. This ancestor, through his acumen and integrity, earned for himself and his family a principality where he and his successors began to rule as a vassal of the Pala sovereign. A feudal administrative set-up of this type, first introduced by the Palas, came to stay as a convention in Bengal during the succeeding ages.[3] Sāmantasena, the grandfather of Vijayasena, who, in all probability, was the first of the family to establish himself as a feudatory king and his son Hemantasena, who has been described as a *mahārājādhirāja* in the inscription of his successors, had the headquarters of their principality somewhere in Birbhum[4], the eastern boundaries of which possibly

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[1] Utkala Brahmins of Bankura are found to bear the following surnames: Shāsnigrāhi, Dandapāṭ, Singha-Mahāpātra, Misra, Mahāpātra, Pātra, Satpati, Mahānti, Pāṭhak, Nāyek, Dās, Pandā, Dās-Chakrabarti, Pāin, Praharāj, Subaddhi, Singha-Chaudhuri, Singha-Hikim, Singha-Baraṭhākur, Singha-Bābu, Goswāmi etc.

[2] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

[3] Niharranjan Ray—*Bāngālir Itihās, Ādiparva*. Calcutta, 1359. B.S. pp. 497-500.

[4] In Pāikar (or Pāikor) in P. S. Murārai of Birbhum district, under a banyan tree near the high school, there are a few pieces of stones of historical importance. One of these contains the name of Raja Vijaysena. (Census 1951—District Handbook: Birbhum. Calcutta, 1954, p. 149).

touched the Bhagirathi in the regions now in Murshidabad or Burdwan district. Taking advantage of the weakening of the Pala hold over Bengal under Kumarapala and his son Madanapala, Vijayasena, the third king of the family, led a number of successful expeditions against the loyal vassals of the Palas, other neighbouring kings and against the Palas themselves and eventually captured sovereign power in Bengal. The Deopārā inscription records the names of kings over whom Vijayasena scored victories. One of them was Vira, identified by many scholars as Viraguna of Kotatabi and mentioned in the *Rāmacharita* of Sandhyakaranandi. The inscription also mentions one Rāghava, who might have been the second son of the Utkala king Anantavarmana Choḍaganga. And the king of Gauḍa whom Vijayasena defeated may be none other than Madanapala. Vijayasena also concluded a diplomatic alliance by marrying a princess of the Sura family of Apara-Mandara in Dakshin-Rāḍh.[1] From what has been said above it can be reasonably inferred that a sizable portion of the tracts now forming the Bankura district came under the effective control of Vijayasena. Whether Vijayasena extended his direct administration over the region he conquered south of the Damodar river or left it to local feudatory chiefs is not definitely known. But this much is certain that the Senas followed the Pala practice of allowing the local chiefs semi-independent feudatory status.

We do not get even any indirect reference to that part of the country, now included in the Bankura district, during the rule of the later Senas. *Vallāla-Charita* gives us a list of territories comprising the kingdom of Ballālasena (1158-1179 A.D.) which embraced Vaṅga, Rāḍh (presumably, Uttara-Rāḍh and unspecified parts of Dakshina-Rāḍh), Barendri, Mithilā and Bagḍi (the Bagri pargana of Midnapur district). His son Lakshmanasena (1179-1205 A.D.) came to the throne some time in 1179 A.D. probably at a fairly advanced age. He not only retained the kingdom left to him by his father but extended it to the west by defeating the Gaṅaḍawāl king ruling over Magadha and Banaras. It is also possible that he led his victorious armies into Orissa but whether he succeeded in annexing Orissa and the adjoining areas to his kingdom remains uncertain.

MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

Invasion of Bengal by Md. Bakhtyār Khilji

An event of tremendous importance heralding in a new epoch, popularly termed as the mediaeval period in Bengal, took place in 1201 A.D. which, naturally, had far-reaching consequences also in the jungle-clad westernmost part of Bengal concerning us at present. It was the invasion of Bengal by Muhammad Bakhtyār Khilji which took place in 1201 A.D. during the reign of Lakshmanasena, the last ruler of the Sena dynasty.

[1] Niharranjan Ray—op. cit. pp. 502-03.

Having occupied Nadia, the capital of Lakshmanasena, Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji did not stay in south Bengal for long but pushed on to Gauḍa or Lakhnāwati in Malda district. He then completed the conquest of Barendri and started with a portion of the spoils of Bengal for Delhi to meet Mālik Qutbuddin Āibak to seek from him the recognition of his conquest. He set up some governorships on the frontiers of his newly won kingdom, one of which was located at Lakhnor or Nagar (Rājnagar) in Birbhum district. During the reign of Sultan Ghyāsuddin Iwāz Khilji (1213-1227 A.D.), Vishnu, the minister and general of the Imperial Ganga emperor Anangabhima III, invaded Bengal and seized this frontier post. Sultan Ghyasuddin Iwaz Khilji set out to recover Nagar and there was protracted fighting between him and Vishnu resulting in the victory of the former who succeeded in pushing the southern frontiers of his kingdom from the banks of the Ajay river to those of the Damodar and up to the borders of Vishnupur.

The principal sources of information about the Orissa kings and their activities are the series of inscriptions at Sreekurman,[1] Simhāchalam,[2] Bhubaneswar[3] and the copper plate grants of Narasimhadeva II, Bhānudeva II, Narasimhadeva IV and *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri.* In 1242 A.D., during the reign of Sultan Tughrāl Tughān Khan, Raja Narasimhadeva I of the Imperial Ganga dynasty of Orissa, who had succeeded Anangavimadeva III, sent an expedition into Bengal for conquering the territories east of the river Bhāgirathi. Narasimhadeva I annexed to his kingdom of Orissa some portions of Bengal which had been occupied by the Muhammadans. His policy was not of a defensive nature against Muslim onslaught; he played an aggressive role and invaded Bengal more than once. Sultan Iltutmish had died in 1236 A.D. and from 1236 to 1246 A.D., the imperial authority of Delhi remained weak. During this period Tughan Khan was the Governor of Bengal, with whom Narasimhadeva had crossed swords.

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The Muslim historian Minhājus Shirāj[4] writes that Narasimhadeva I defeated the Muslims at Kāṭāsin and invaded Lakhnor and Lakshmanavati. When the Orissan army began plundering the territory of the Sultan on the Lakhnor side, Tughan Khan marched with his forces south-east after crossing the rivers Ajay and Damodar. The army of Orissa made a strategic retreat receding to their frontier fortress of Katasin situated in a region full of jungles and cane-bushes. [Katasin has been identified by N. K. Bhattasali with Kaṭhasanga, 5 miles south-east of Sonamukhi (now a thana head-quarters in the Vishnupur subdivision), about 12 miles south of the

[1] S.I.I. Vol. V.
[2] S.I.I. Vol. IV.
[3] J.B.O.R.S. Vol. XV. p. 280.
[4] *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri.*

Damodar. There is an alternative theory identifying Katasin with Kistnagur shown on Rennell's Atlas in the same locality, about 25 miles west-southwest of Burdwan. In either case, it would appear that Katasin was located in an area now within the district of Bankura.]

The Turks ousted from Rāḍh

On the 16th of April 1244 A.D., the Turks delivered an assault on the fort of Katasin but were beaten back. Tughan Khan fled and managed to save his own life. He appealed for help to the Sultan of Delhi, Ālāuddin Māsud Shāh, who ordered the governors of Kārā-Mānikpur and Oudh to unite their forces and come to the rescue of Tughan Khan. Narasimhadeva invaded Bengal again and sacked Lakhnor, the capital city of Rāḍh. Tughan Khan was defeated and Lakhnor was plundered. The rule of the Turks was thus terminated in Rāḍh and Barendri was invaded next year. These achievements of Narasimhadeva I have been referred to in the copper plate grants of Narasimhadeva II as follows: "The (white) river Ganga, blackened for a great distance by the collyrium washed away by tears from the eyes of the weeping *yavanis* (Muhammadan women) of Rāḍh and Varendri and rendered waveless, as if by this astonishing achievement, was now transformed, by that monarch (Narasimhadeva I) into the black-watered Yamuna."[1]

The Turks stage a come-back

In 1253 A.D., the Rāḍh country again became the scene of warfare during the reign of Sultan Mughisuddin Yuzbak, the governor in Bengal of the imperial Sultan, Ghiyasuddin Balban. In November-December of that year, Sultan Mughisuddin Yuzbak led an expedition into Rāḍh to recover the territory lost to the Orissan emperor but his fate was no better than that of Tughral Tughan Khan. A powerful chief of Orissa, who was the son-in-law and a vassal of king Narasimhadeva I, had established a strong feudatory kingdom in Bengal with its capital at Mādāran (Mandāran) now in the district of Hooghly. Sultan Mughisuddin Yuzbak was defeated by him with heavy losses. Two years later, i.e. in November-December 1255 A.D., Sultan Mughisuddin Yuzbak again attacked Rāḍh. This time he was more successful and by a well-planned assault captured Madaran. He then turned his attention to reconquering Rāḍh and was able to annex to the kingdom of Lakhnawati the whole of Rāḍh, i.e. that part of the present Burdwan Division lying north of the district of Midnapur and Bankura.

Retaliatory action against the kingdom of Orissa

Sultan Mughisuddin Tughral, who ruled from 1268 to 1281 A.D., carried out plundering raids into the territory of Jājnagar which, at that time, not only consisted of parts of modern Orissa but almost certainly large portions of western Bengal, namely parts of Birbhum, Bankura, Burdwan, Hooghly and Midnapur districts of the present day.

[1] J.A.S.B., Vol. LXV. p. 231.

At the end of the 13th century, Bengal comprised four large governorships—Bihar, Saptagrām, Bāng and Devkoṭ—which seems to indicate that Orissan suzerainty at least over a large part of the modern Hooghly district must have had come to an end by that time. The position of the fort of Mandaran was somewhat peculiar inasmuch as it changed hands a number of times. Sometimes it was under the occupation of the Orissan kings and on other occasions it was held by the Sultans of Bengal. The latter began gaining an upper hand in their struggle against Orissa from the reign of Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah who ascended the throne of Lakhnawati in 1342 A.D. He appears to have pushed the frontiers of Bengal further south. He led an expedition into Orissa up to the Chilkā lake and returned with an immense booty including a number of elephants. Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah was succeeded by his son Sikandar Shah in 1357 A.D. It was about this time, in 1360 A.D., that Firuz Shah Tughluq, the Sultan of Delhi, organized an expedition against Jājnagar in Orissa—an event which has considerable bearing on the history of the western frontiers of Bengal.

Jājnagar [exped]ition of [Sulta]n Firuz Tughluq:

A unique manuscript in Persian—the *Sirāt-i-Firuz Shāhi*—now preserved in the Bānkipur Library,[1] constitutes a source of first-rate importance relating to the history of the reign of Sultan Firuz Shah of the Tughluq dynasty. According to one of its verses, it appears that it was composed at the dictates of Firuz Shah.[2] The account of the *Sirāt-i-Firuz Shāhi*[3] supplies not only with the details of his expedition into Orissa but also furnishes valuable information about the prosperity and wealth of that country, the splendour of the Jagannath temple at Puri, and of what is of special interest to us, the characteristics of the aborigines of the inaccessible regions of South Bihar and its neighbourhood who were, till then, almost untouched by outside influence or interference.

The description of Firuz Shah's Jājnagar expedition given in the *Sirāt* is superior to other contemporary accounts in more than one sense. In *Tārikh-i-Firuz Shāhi* by Shāms-i-Sirāj' Āfif, it is merely stated that Sultan Firuz marched from Bihar to Cuttack-Baranasi. The account in *Munsahāt-i-Mahru* is more detailed but it does not describe the route of Sultan Firuz's march to Cuttack, nor his widespread traversing of the country.

Sultan Firuz set out on this expedition from Jaunpur towards

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[1] No. 547, Vol. VII, of the Bankipur Catalogue.

[2] According to Shams-ul-Ulema Hidayet Hossain the work was dictated by Sultan Firuz. He based his opinion on the word *Imlā* which means dictation (J.R.A.S.B., July 1914, XCVIII). The work, however, deals with such varied and technical topics, e.g. astronomy, pharmacopoea and its stylistic peculiarities vary so widely from those of *Futuhāt-i-Firuz Shāhi*, which was composed by Sultan Firuz (*vide*, J.R.A.S.B., Aug. 1941) that we have hardly any doubt that the work was written at the dictates, but not to the dictation of Sultan Firuz.

[3] The following observations on Firuz's Jajnagar expedition are based on: N. B. Roy: Jajnagar Expedition of Sultan Firuz Shah—J.R.A.S.B., Letters: Vol. VIII. Calcutta, 1942.

the middle of October 1360 A.D.[1] Ascending the throne of Delhi at a difficult time in 1351 A.D., he had restored order and security in his kingdom and had recovered the imperial territories from Oudh to the banks of the Kusi by defeating Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah of Lakhnawati in 1352-53 A.D. It is possible that the existence of two independent kingdoms in the east, Bengal and Orissa. galled his pride. Accordingly, he led an expedition into Bengal in 1358-59 A.D. During his halt at Jaunpur (July-September 1360) on his way back to Delhi, he conceived the idea of making a lightning raid into Jajnagar from the north. He started from Jaunpur with a light cavalry and reaching Bihar about December 1360, marched on to Pātchet (modern Pānchet) through the undulating plateaus of southern Bihar. The area presented a beautiful landscape with low hills and dales, dotted with orchards abounding in various kinds of fruits. Game was plentiful in the region. Eventually, the Sultan burst upon Sikhar in Manbhum district which was the stronghold of an important chief with thirty-six minor chiefs as his vassals. The raja fled on being surprised by the invading army. Having overpowered the fortress at Sikhar, the Muslim army pushed southward through the defiles of Manbhum and Singhbhum and pressed forward to Jajnagar. It is clear from the account that Firuz Shah's expedition led him up to Puri and Cuttack along a forest-clad route that lay through hilly terrain in South Bihar and possibly also the western fringes of Bengal. Furthermore, this account removes doubts about the location of the kingdom of Jajnagar which was undoubtedly in Orissa.

The description contained in *Sirāt-i-Firuz Shāhi* and *Munsahāt-i-Mahru* and the reference in *Mākhzan-i-Āfghānā*, to the kingdom of Jajnagar, refutes a previous view propounded by Major Raverty and supported by R. D. Banerji that Jajnagar and Orissa were two different kingdoms. Raverty wrote, "Jajnagar appears to have been bounded on the east by the range of hills forming the present west boundary of Udisah-Jag-nath, Katasin, on the Mahanadi, being (the) nearest frontier town towards the Lakhanawati territory. Farther north it was bounded towards the east by the river called Braminy..."[2] According to R. D. Banerji, "Firuz Tughlaq advanced from Bihar towards Gaḍhakatankā. Jajnagar lay at the extremity of this province which is the same as the British district of Jabbalpur..." After passing through Jajnagar, says R. D. Banerji, Firuz Tughlaq entered the kingdom of Bhānudeva III (i.e. Orissa).[3] But, if the inferences of Raverty and R. D. Banerji are taken together, it appears that the kingdom of Jajnagar extended

[1] *Tārikh-i-Mubārak Shāhi*, B. I. series, p. 129; *Tabāqat-i-Ākbari*, B. I. Series, p. 232, give this date.

[2] Eng. Trans. of *Tabāqat-i-Nāsiri* (B. I. Series, p. 588) by Raverty.

[3] R. D. Banerji—History of Orissa, Vol. I. p. 282.

from the eastern part of modern Madhya Pradesh up to the western limits of Bengal (since Katasin in Bankura is cited as a frontier town in the east of the kingdom of Jajnagar). In that case, Cuttack, Puri, the Chilka lake etc. lay within the dominions of that kingdom, and as such, the existence of a separate kingdom of Orissa is difficult to conceive. According to the *Sirāt*, Firuz marched from Bihar to Sikhar (Sikharbhum in Manbhum, or the present district of Purulia) and from there to the town of Tinanagar and to Kiniānagar (which appears to be an abbreviation of Kinchingānagar, the ancient capital of Mayurbhanj) both of which were included within the kingdom of Jajnagar. D. C. Sarkar is also of the opinion that the kingdom of Jajnagar comprised the whole of coastal Orissa and that at first its capital was at Jajnagar but later on, owing to increasing pressure of Muslim raids from Bengal, was shifted to the Barabāṭi area of Cuttack.[1]

The most interesting part of the narrative in the *Sirāt*, however, relates to the graphic description of the Jajnagar country as well as the jungle terrain through which Firuz travelled and of the people who inhabited these parts, their nature, manners and customs.[2]

The rule of the Ilyās Shāhi dynasty: further strifes with Orissa

To come back to the main trend of our narrative, Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah was succeeded by his son Sikandar Shah in 1357 A.D. Sikandar Shah was succeeded by Ghyāsuddin Āzam who was, in turn, succeeded by Saifuddin Hāmzā Shāh who was succeeded in 1410 by Shāhābuddin Bayāzid Shāh who reigned for only about two years. His successor, Ālāuddin Firuz Shāh, was removed from the throne of Gauḍa by Raja Ganesh. The Ilyās Shāhi dynasty was restored to the throne again in 1442 A.D. in the person of Nāsiruddin Māhmud. It seems that during the reign of later Ilyas Shahi Sultans, immediately preceding Raja Ganesh, the kings of Orissa had succeeded in regaining some of the ground lost by them during the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah. In an inscription of 1447 A.D., Kapilendra Deva (1436-70) of Orissa styled himself as *Gauḍeshwara* (lord of Gauḍa) and claimed to have conquered 'Mallika Parisha', an expression interpreted as having an obvious reference to the Muslim rulers of Gauḍa. But Sātgāon or Saptagrām apparently remained within the dominions of the Sultans of Bengal during the reign of Sultan Nāsiruddin Māhmud. The fort of Mandaran continued to remain as one of the frontier posts and, as such, might have changed hands more than once. During the reign of Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak (1459-1474 A.D.), the fort of Mandaran was held by one Raja Gajapati. The campaign against Gajapati was led by Shāh Ismāil Ghāzi, a Qureishite Arab of Mecca, who had taken service under

[1] D. C. Sarkar—Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India. Banaras, 1960. pp. 146-49.

[2] N. B. Roy—Jajnagar Expedition of Sultan Firuz Shah: J.R.A.S.B., Letters, Vol. VIII. Calcutta, 1942.

the Sultan of Gauḍa.[1] This expedition led to the conquest of the Mandāran fort by the forces of Gauḍa.

Alauddin Hussain Shah ascended the throne of Gauḍa in 1493 A.D. He is said to have subjugated all territories up to Orissa. According to the *Chaitanya Bhāgavata* of Brindaban Das, Hussain destroyed many temples during his campaign in Orissa. It appears that taking advantage of the absence of Pratap Rudra, the last of the Gajapati kings of Orissa, from his capital, Hussain invaded his kingdom, captured Puri and destroyed the images in the Jagannath temple there. Pratap Rudra hurried back on receipt of the news and Hussain Shah retreated to Bengal and took shelter in the Mandaran fort. Pratap Rudra came in pursuit, besieged the fort, but due to the treachery of one of his generals, Govinda Vidyādhar, had to raise the siege and withdraw.

The south-western frontier of Bengal perhaps did not extend at this time beyond the estuary of the Rupnarayan in the south or the south of the Damodar in the south-west. This means that Hussain Shah's kingdom included the modern districts of Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah and a part of the district of Midnapur in the west and south-west. In the *Chaitanya Mangal* details of the route followed by Shri Chaitanya on his way to Puri have been given. It is gathered from this source that Shri Chaitanya crossed the Bhagirathi at Sāntipur and arrived at Ambikā Kālnā in the district of Burdwan. From there he travelled south keeping the Bhagirathi to his left and

[1] In O'Malley's Bankura District Gazetteer (pp. 170-71), the following passage occurs about Lokpur, a village in P.S. Kotulpur: "It contains a shrine held in great veneration by the Muhammadans of the neighbourhood, who make vows and offerings there. The local legend connected with this shrine is that many generations ago a saint named Ismail Ghāzi, who was a notable champion of Islām, warred against the Hindu Rājā of Garh Mandāran and was killed in battle. His head was removed miraculously, but a single drop of blood dropped on the spot where the shrine now stands. The latter is built of stone, and is said to have been erected in the course of a single night. The shrine is in charge of a family of local *fakirs*, some revenue-free lands being assigned for its maintenance. In the adjoining district of Hooghly there is a legend that Shāh Ismail Ghāzi invaded Orissa with success and was falsely accused by a Hindu of attempting to set up an independent kingdom at Mandāran. He was called to Gaur and there beheaded by the order of Husain Shāh. The headless trunk straightway mounted a horse which stood near, and rode off to Mandāran, where it was buried. It seems at least an historical fact that Ismail was a general of Husain Shāh, who invaded Orissa in the beginning of the 16th century, gained a victory over the Orissan army and then returned to Mandāran (the modern Bhitargarh in the Hooghly district), where he built a fort in which he lies buried." We know further that Shah Ismail Ghazi came from the holy city of Mecca to Lakhnāwati at the court of Sultan Barbak Shah, where he first attracted the notice of the Sultan by his engineering skill. He was "then appointed to conduct warfare in different frontiers of his kingdom. He defeated Gajapati, the Raja of Orissa, and wrested from him Mandaran. Raja [illegible] of Kamrup was defeated by him and was forced to pay tribute to the Bengal Sultan... This warrior-saint, who did so much for the Muslim [illegible], was beheaded by the order of the Sultan in 878/A.D. 1474... Tradition has it that the head of the Saint was buried at Kantaduar in Rangpur district and the body at Mandaran. Both the places have since been sacred to the Muslims." (Social History of the Muslims in Bengal by Abdul Karim. Dacca, 1959. pp. 118-49).

reached Kulingrām, another village in the same district. Proceeding further, he crossed the Damodar (Devanad) and came to Tamralipta (Tāmalipta) or modern Tamluk *via* Shiākhālā in Hooghly district. It also appears from the *Chaitanya Charitāmrita* of Krishnadās Kavirāj that Pichhaldā, which was situated on the Haldi or the Kangsabati river near its mouth (in Midnapur district), was one of the frontier outposts of the Sultans of Bengal in the south-west in addition to the stronghold at Mandaran. There is, however, an alternative theory that Pichhaldā was on the Rupnarayan in Syampur police station of Howrah district.

The rule of the Sur dynasty

The dynasty founded by Alauddin Hussain Shah came to an end with Ghiyasuddin Mahmud who was defeated by Sher Shah in 1538 and expelled from Bengal. Sher Shah, as is well known, subsequently came out victorious against Humāyun and ascended the throne of Delhi. The empire founded by Sher Shah did not last long and with the death of his son, Islām Shāh Sur, in 1553, it began to disintegrate. Bengal was one of the first provinces to break off from the Central authority. Muhammad Khan, the Sur viceroy of Bengal at that time, declared his independence. He was succeeded by his son Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah in 1556. The Sur dynasty in Bengal came to an end in 1564 when the Karrānis replaced them. Tāj Khān was the first Sultan of this line. He was succeeded in 1565 by his brother Sulaiman Karrani. In Orissa, Pratāp Rudra Dev was followed by weak successors who failed to keep their feudatories in check and ultimately the authority of the Gajapati dynasty was usurped by the minister Mukunda Dev who had given shelter to Ibrāhim Sur, the rival of Adili (Mohammad Shāh 'Ādil). In 1565 Mukunda Dev showed allegiance to Akbar and agreed to send Ibrāhim Sur to invade Bengal in case Sulaiman Karrani rose against the emperor of Delhi. In 1567-68 Akbar was engaged in the siege of Chitor. Sulaiman Karrani took advantage of Akbar's preoccupation to send an expedition into Orissa under his son Bayāzid. This force advanced through the jungle of Chhotanagpur and Mayurbhanj. The officers deputed by Mukunda Dev to oppose the Afghan forces rebelled and in the retaliatory battle that followed Mukunda Dev and one of the officers were killed. Rāmchandra Bhanja, who was then the commander of Sarang-garh,[1] seized the throne but Sulaiman Karrani treacherously imprisoned and killed him. He also disposed of Ibrāhim Sur in a similar manner. Orissa thus passed into the hands of Sulaiman Karrani, the Sultan of Bengal.

[1] There is a mound in the village of Sarengarh in P. S. Ranibandh of Bankura district, situated on the bank of the Kumari near its confluence with the Kangsabati. The local legend is that the mound contains the ruins of a fort of Anantavarman Chodaganga of Orissa. Here also, we have a reference to the fort of Sarang-garh, under Orissan command, and as such, conjectures about its identification with the afore-mentioned ruins of a fort may not be entirely out of place.

Sulaiman Karrani died in 1572 and was succeeded by his eldest son Bayazid. Bayazid, however, could not command the obedience of the nobles and was killed by Hansu, the nephew and son-in-law of Sulaiman who himself was killed by Miān Ludi, the wazir. The nobles then raised Sulaiman's younger son Dāud to the throne. Daud got involved in quarrels with Mian Ludi, the wazir, while Akbar was pursuing his eastward march towards Bengal. In 1574 Daud was defeated and he fled to Orissa by way of Satgaon (Saptagram) in Hooghly district. Akbar's general Mun'im Khan sent strong detachments in several directions—including one to Saptagram—to oust the local Afghan officers. Burdwan was made the forward base of the Mughal army from where it was led by Raja Todar Mal to Garh-Mandaran (Mandaran) in the Arambagh subdivision of Hooghly district. The actual battle with Daud's forces took place at Tukāroi in Midnapur district, nine miles south-east of Dāntan. Daud Khan was defeated and fled to Cuttack where he ultimately submitted to Mun'im Khan. Immediately after his victory over Daud Khan, Mun'im Khan had to return to North Bengal to quell the disturbances which had broken out there during his absence, but he died soon after at Tāndā in October 1575. The Mughal forces became demoralized and retreated to Bhagalpur. Daud Khan took advantage of these reverses and rose again in Orissa and re-occupied the whole of Bengal. In 1576 A.D. Daud Khan was defeated and killed.

The Mughal conquest of Bengal: Vishnupur recognizes Mughal suzerainty

Mān Singh, while he was Governor of Bihar, set out in April 1590 for the conquest of Orissa. He reached Jāhānābād (modern Arambagh in the district of Hooghly) *via* Bhagalpur and Burdwan and encamped there being held up by early rains of Bengal. Jahanabad was then on the frontier of Orissa. Qutlu Khān Lohāni, the Afghan ruler of North Orissa, sent a large force to the fort of Rāipur, situated some fifty miles west of Jahanabad, which was probably the same as Raipur in the modern district of Bankura. Jagat Singh, the son of Man Singh, was in charge of the advance guard of the Mughal forces. He failed to exercise proper caution and was surprised by the Afghans. The Mughal army broke and fled and Jagat Singh was wounded but was saved from capture by the Malla king Bir Hāmbir who gave him asylum in the Vishnupur fort. Qutlu Khan died a few days after this event and the Afghans came to terms with the Mughals. The truce was, however, short-lived and in 1591 the Afghans attacked the kingdom of Bir Hambir for his loyalty to the emperor of Delhi. Man Singh promptly went to his help and succeeded in defeating the Afghans and conquering Orissa.

During the reign of Jahāngir, Islām Khān was appointed Subahdar of Bengal in 1608 A.D. Almost immediately after assumption of office, he planned a campaign against Musā Khān, the acknowledged leader of the twelve Bhuinyās in East Bengal. Before setting out

on the expedition, he sent a force under Shaikh Kāmāl to reduce Bir Hāmbir (Bir Hāmir), Shams Khān and Salim Khān to obedience. Bir Hambir submitted without fight. He and the other two chiefs accompanied Shaikh Kamal to the camp of the Subahdar at Ālāipur in East Bengal and there submitted their *peshkāsh* to the latter. The chieftains were apparently allowed to return to their territories because during the administration of the next viceroy, Qāsim Khān, another expedition under the same Shaikh Kamal, was sent against them as also Bir Khān, the zemindar of Chandrakonā, to enforce their personal attendance before the Subahdar. But Shaikh Kamal does not appear to have met with success this time as the forces under him had not been sufficiently equipped at the instance of the Subahdar himself. The *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi*, from which this account has been taken, refers to Bir Hambir (Bir Hamir) once as the zemindar of Birbhum and on another occasion as the zemindar of Pachet.

Reforms of Murshid Quli Khān

Murshid Quli Khān, as the Dewan and then the Subahdar of Bengal, carried out certain measures for improving land revenue collections. According to the *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, the zemindars of Birbhum and Vishnupur being protected by dense forests, mountains and hills did not have to appear personally before the Dewan or the Subahdar but deputed instead their agents to carry on transactions on their behalf and used to pay, through them, the usual tributes, presents etc.

Administrative system in the Mediaeval Period: Bankura and neighbouring areas

The system followed during the Afghan and the Mughal regimes for collection and administration of land taxes in Bengal as also the places occupied in that system by the local chieftains whose territories now comprise the modern district of Bankura, are subjects worthy of a discussion. Unfortunately for us, the information available on these points are neither adequate nor satisfactory. It may, however, be useful to cite in this context the following two extracts having a bearing on the matter. E. A. Gait, in the Census Report of Bengal of 1901, wrote—"During Muhammadan rule the authority of the Central Government varied with the character of the King or Governor for the time being. If he was energetic and masterful, the whole Province accepted his authority, but if he was weak and indolent, the local rulers became practically independent. Chief among these were the Barah Bhuiyas of Eastern and Southern Bengal of whom Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore and Isha Khan of Khizrpur, who is mentioned by Ralph Fitch, are the best known. The Rajas of Vishnupur in Bankura, or Mallabhum as it was then called, and Burdwan were also practically independent so long as they paid the revenue assessed on their estates."[1]

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[1] Note: "In the *Āin* the revenue of Bengal as it stood in 1582, excluding numerous *abwabs* or special imposts, was fixed at Rs. 1,06,85,944. This was levied from the ryots in specie as the equivalent of the fourth share of the gross produce. In 1765, when the East India Company acquired the *Diwani*, the net amount of all revenue collected by authority was Rs. 2,56,24,223." (E. A. Gait—Report on the Census of Bengal 1901, pp. 6-7).

R. K. Mukherjee made the following observations on this subject —"Bengal at this time was made up of five distinct regions known as (1) *Mithila*, west of Mahananda, (2) *Varendra*, north of the Padma and between Mahananda and Karotoya rivers, (3) *Rāḍha*, west of the Hughli and south of the Ganges, (4) *Bagḍi*, the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra and (5) *Vanga* to the east of this delta. The Moslem conquest of Bengal included south-eastern parts of *Mithila*, *Varendra*, northern part of *Rāḍha* and north-western part of the *Bagḍi*. The capital of this Moslem Bengal was located at Lakhnawati.

"Bengal was a dependency of Delhi up to the year 1338. Even before 1338, the loyalty of the Moslem Governors of Bengal to Delhi was very shaky. Remittances of revenue or tribute were seldom regular and sometimes were stopped altogether. The capital of Bengal, Gaur or Lakhnawati was called Balghakpur, 'the City of Rebellion' in Delhi. Bughra, the second son of Sultan Balban, declared independence in Bengal when his son Kaikobad ascended the throne of Delhi. The Moslems had by this time extended their rule into *Vanga* or Eastern Bengal. Bughra's successors maintained their independence until two of his grandsons quarrelled over the succession, when the elder invoked the aid of Sultan Tughlaq who invaded Bengal and carried off the younger, Bahadur, as a prisoner. Bahadur returned to rule in Eastern Bengal at Sonargaon. But he again rebelled and was killed. In 1339 Ali Shah, who established himself as ruler of Western Bengal, rebelled, and was not checked by the then Sultan of Delhi, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. In 1345, he was assassinated at the instigation of his foster-brother, Shamsuddin Iliyas, who annexed Eastern Bengal in 1352 and became sovereign of all Bengal. In vain did Sultan Firuz of Delhi proceed against Iliyas and his son. Bengal remained independent till 1538 when it was overrun by Emperor Humayun. But Bengal's independence was restored after 3 months by Sher Khan's defeat of Humayun at Chausa but again destroyed by Sher Shah after his ascent of the Imperial throne.

"Bengal, whether a dependency of Delhi or an independent kingdom, was not a homogeneous Moslem State. Great Hindu landholders held estates which were, in fact, principalities and their allegiance to a Moslem ruler, like his to a Sultan of Delhi, depended on the ruler's personality. The chief of these States was Vishnupur, governed by a Hindu dynasty which was founded in the eighth century and endured until the eighteenth, when it was ruined by the ravages of the Marathas, and by the famine of 1770 which depopulated its territory."[1]

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[1] R. K. Mukherji—'Indian Land System' in the Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1940. p. 157.

Accession of Ālivardi: Mārāṭha raids in Bengal

Ālivardi seized the throne of Bengal in 1740 A.D. when Orissa was a part of the Bengal *Subāh* and was obliged to take up arms at once against the Deputy Governor of Orissa, Rustam Jang, who was the son-in-law of Nawab Sujāuddin. Alivardi emerged victorious but while he was on his way back to Murshidabad, he received news at Jaygarh, near Midnapur, of a Mārāṭha advance into Bengal for collection of *chauth* or one-fourth of the Imperial revenues which had been assigned to them by the Emperor of Delhi. Had the Marathas advanced into Bengal *via* Orissa, Alivardi would have been in a position to intercept them effectively. But the Maratha army entered Bengal through Birbhum and Vishnupur. According to Holwell, the Rajas of Birbhum and Vishnupur were highly incensed because of some earlier oppressive measures of Alivardi and were, on that account, willing to allow the Marathas free entrance into the heart of Bengal without putting up a fight although this short-sightedness on their part led to a series of calamities in their respective territories.

The main fighting against the Marathas took place, at first, in the district of Burdwan where Alivardi managed to hold his ground and then retreated to Murshidabad *via* Kātwā. From there his troops pressed hard on the Marathas led by Bhāskar Pandit. "Bhaskar fled to Pachet and his detachments scattered in Burdwan, Hugli, Hijli, and other places also took to their heels. The Council in Calcutta wrote to the Court of Directors on the 30th October, 1742: 'The Nabab (Nawab) near his capital being joined with the forces from Patna and other parts advanced to Cuttua (Katwa), the Morattoes (Marathas) retreating before him when a battle ensued, the victory fell to the Nabab who drove them into the Punchat (Pachet) country but with little or no loss on either side. There are since retired to Ramgur, the party of them at Hughley (Hugli) and Tanna have since quitted those places.' The Marathas could not be pursued further by the Bengal troops through the dense jungles of Panchet. Acting according to the instructions of Mir Habib, Bhaskar left Panchet, turned towards Bisnupura (in the Bankura district), and then advancing by way of Chandrakona reached the Midnapur district where he encamped at Naraingarh and burnt and plundered Radhanagar and other towns.

The siege of Vishnupur

"Bhaskar sent a detachment also to Orissa where Alivardi's Deputy Governor, Shaikh Masum, bravely attempted to oppose it but was defeated and killed at Jaypur. Thus Orissa was about to fall under Maratha control. But Alivardi's prompt measures prevented it. On hearing of the sad fate of Shaikh Masum, he left Pachet and advanced through Burdwan to Midnapur. Bhaskar, thereupon, fled towards Balasore but soon turned back and had a fight with the Nawab, at a distance of about four miles from Midnapur, which resulted in his defeat.... This disconcerted the Marathas who

immediately turned their back being hotly pursued and driven beyond the Chilka Lake by the Nawab's troops in the month of December, 1742."[1]

An interesting side-light on the Maratha raid of 1742 under Bhaskar Rao is to be found in a recent publication.[2] At the time of this invasion, Gopāl Singh, a devout Vaishnava, was the ruling Malla chief of Vishnupur. When the raiders besieged his capital, Gopāl Singh ordered all its inhabitants to pray to Madanmohan, the principal deity in the beleaguered city, for deliverance. The Vishnupur fortress, well-protected by strong bastioned walls and deep surrounding moats, was quite invulnerable to the light artillery carried by the fast-moving marauders. But instead of resorting to might or even to a spirited defence, the weak king of Vishnupur chose to pin his faith on providence. A local legend, widely believed even to this day, relates that Madanmohan, moved by the fervent appeals of his devotees, took charge of the defence of the city himself and miraculously showered shots from two big cannons, one of which is still preserved at Vishnupur and is known by the name of *Dalamardan* ('slayer of the invading hordes') or, more popularly, *Dalmādal*. Through this fortuitous divine interference, the Maratha army is supposed to have fled in complete disarray.

Ravages in the Vishnupur territory by the Maratha raiders

The battles with the Marathas continued off and on for nine long years, mostly in the districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan and Midnapur in the course of which the marauders harried mostly the less protected parts of the country. Their ravages have been graphically described in *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*: "Sacking the villages and towns of the surrounding tracts, and engaging in slaughter and captures, they set fire to granaries and spared no vestige of fertility. And when the stores and granaries of Burdwan were exhausted, and the supply of imported grains were also completely cut off, to avert death by starvation, human beings ate plantain roots, whilst animals were fed on the leaves of trees. Even these gradually ceased to be available. For breakfast and supper, nothing except the disc of the sun and then moon feasted their eyes. The whole tract from Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) to Midnapur and Jaleswar came into the possession of the Marathas. Those murderous free-booters drowned in the rivers a large number of the people, after cutting off their ears, noses and hands. Tying sacks of dirt to the mouths of others, they mangled and burnt them with indescribable tortures."[3] The effect of the Maratha raids has also been graphically described by William Hunter in his Statistical Account of Burdwan: "Year after year

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[1] K. K. Datta—Alivardi and His Times (2nd revised edn.). Calcutta, 1963. p. [illegible]

[2] [illegible] Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. pp. [illegible]

[3] *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, tr. by Maulavi Abdus Salam. Calcutta, 1904.

the inexhaustible Maratha hordes overflowed upon the border. Under the Muhammadan system, a family was secure in proportion as it was near the frontier and distant from Court, but now safety could be found only in the heart of the Province. The Marathas fell with their heaviest weight upon the border principalities of Birbhum and Bishnupur. Tribute, free quarters, forced services, exactions of a hundred sorts, reduced the once powerful frontier houses to poverty; and their tenantry fled from a country in which the peasant had become a mere machine for growing food for the soldier. Burdwan not only lay further inland, but its marshy and river-intersected surface afforded a less tempting field for cavalry, and a better shelter for the people. The Marathas spent their energy in plundering the intervening frontier tracts of Birbhum and Bishnupur, where the dry soil and fine undulating surface afforded precisely the riding ground which their cavalry loved. There they could harry the villages exhaustively, and in detail, by means of small parties."

Vishnupur Raj or the Mallas of Mallabhum

Running parallel to and not altogether divorced from the main current of Bengal's history, we find another discernible current, limited in expanse and complexity, covering Mallabhum which, by the 16th century A.D., if not earlier, comprised substantial parts of the present district of Bankura under the Malla Rajas of Vishnupur. R. C. Dutt writes—"The ancient Rajas of Bishnupur trace back their history to a time when the Hindus were still reigning in Delhi, and the name of Musalmans was not yet heard in India. Indeed, they could already count five centuries of rule over the western frontier tracts of Bengal before Bakhtiyar Khilji wrested that province from the Hindus. The Musalman conquest of Bengal, however, made no difference to the Bishnupur princes. Protected by rapid currents like the Damodar, by extensive tracts of scrub-wood and *sāl* jungle, as well as by strong forts like that of Bishnupur, these jungle kings were little known to the Musalman rulers of the fertile portions of Bengal, and were never interfered with. For long centuries, therefore, the kings of Bishnupur were supreme with their extensive territories. At a later period of Musalman rule, and when the Mughal power extended and consolidated itself on all sides, a Mughal army sometimes made its appearance near Bishnupur with claims of tribute, and tribute was probably sometimes paid. Nevertheless, the Subahdars of Murshidabad never had that firm hold over the Rajas of Bishnupur which they had over the closer and more recent Rajaships of Burdwan and Birbhum. As the Burdwan Raj grew in power, the Bishnupur family fell into decay; Maharaja Kirti Chand of Burdwan attacked the Bishnupur Raj and added to his zamindari large slices of his neighbour's territories. The Marathas completed the ruin of the Bishnupur house, which is now an impoverished zamindari in the present day.

"The story by which the Bishnupur Rajas connect themselves with the Kshattriyas of Northern India, is thus told in Dr. Hunter's Annals of Rural Bengal:—'Raghunāth Singh, the founder of the dynasty of Bishnupur, derives his origin from the kings of Jainagar near Brindāban. The story of his parentage is as follows:—The king of Jainagar, being seized with a desire to visit distant countries, set out for Purushottam, and on his way thither passed through Bishnupur. While resting at one of the halting places in the great forest of that country, his wife gave birth to a son; and the king foreseeing the difficulty of carrying a child with him, left the mother and her baby behind in the woods, and went forward on his journey. Soon after the father had departed, a man named Sri Kasmetia Bāgdi (an aboriginal inhabitant), when gathering fire-wood, passed by the halting place, and saw the newly-born child lying helpless and alone. The mother never was heard of; and whether she was devoured by wild beasts, or found shelter with the natives, remains a mystery to this day. The woodman took the infant home, and reared him till he reached the age of seven, when a certain Brāhman of the place, struck with his beauty and the marks of royal descent that were visible on his person, took him to his house. Soon afterwards, the king (an aboriginal prince) having died, his obsequies were celebrated with great pomp, and people from all parts went to the funeral feast. The Brāhman being very poor went among the rest, taking Raghu with him. When the Brāhman was in the middle of his repast, the late king's elephant seized Raghu with his trunk, and approached the empty throne. Great was the consternation and terror, lest the elephant should dash the boy to pieces; but when the royal animal carefully placed the lad on the throne, the whole multitude, thunderstruck at seeing a deed so manifestly done by the will of God, filled the place with their acclamations, and the ministers agreed to crown the boy on the spot. Raghunāth Singh, therefore, was the first king of Bishnupur.'

"Such is the story of the descent of the Bishnupur Kshattriyas from the Kshattriyas of Northern India. If it were not ridiculous to apply the rules of historical criticism to a story which is so apparently a myth, we would ask one or two questions. If Shri Kasmetia Bāgdi, we would enquire, found the child by itself in the forest, how did he (or any one else) know that it was the child of the queen of Jainagar, and not of some unfortunate woman of the neighbourhood who might have better reasons for abandoning her child. If the king of Jainagar, again, found it impossible to carry the new-born child with him, could he not have left some part of his establishment with provision to take care of the queen and the male child until he returned from Purushottam. Is there any evidence, one is inclined to ask, beyond the signs which the learned Brāhman observed on the boy's forehead and the conduct of the inspired

elephant, to shew that the boy was a Kashattriya boy, and not a Bāgdi boy? And, lastly, is there anything to fix the date or the authenticity of the story, or to show that it was not fabricated when the Rajas of Bishnupur were powerful in Western Bengal and had assumed Hindu civilization, and were anxious, therefore, to make out a respectable royal descent for themselves. But it is needless to make such enquiries; the story is exactly such as is prevalent in all parts of India among semi-aboriginal tribes who connect themselves with Aryan ancestors. The fact that the Rajas of Bishnupur called themselves Mallas (an aboriginal title) for many centuries before they assumed the Kshattriya title of Singh, the fact that down to the present day they are known as Bāgdi Rājās all over Bengal, as well as numerous local facts and circumstances all go to prove that the Rājās of Bishnupur are Kshattriyas, because of their long independence and their past history, but not by descent. The story of descent is legendary, but the Kshattriyas of Bishnupur can show the same letters patent for their Kshattriyahood as the Rājputs of Northern India or the original Kshattriyas of India could show, viz., military profession and the exercise of royal powers for centuries."[1]

From his comments extracted above, R. C. Dutt is clearly of the view that the Malla Rajas of Vishnupur were not of North Indian Kshattriya stock but that they had a story made out about their respectable royal descent when they became powerful in western Bengal and assumed Hindu civilization. Oldham, writing about the identical family, upholds the same theory: "The name Malla is a title of the Rajas of Bishnupur, the acknowledged kings of the Bāgdis, and of the present Māls who are their neighbours, around whom are centred the most concrete legends which refer to the connection between the two tribes. The Hindu genealogists of the house of Bishnupur assert that this hereditary title Malla means the wrestler, just as Mānbhum should be Mallabhum the land of the wrestlers. As far as I know, except for the mere coincidence of sounds, both assumptions are equally gratuitous. . . .There is an intimate connection between the Māls and the Bāgdis. To this day they partake of the same hookah and admit a common origin, and, in the case of Bishnupur, a common sovereign; and my observation of both people leads me to conjecture that the Bāgdis are the section of the Māls who have accepted civilization and life in the cultivated country as serfs and co-religionists of the Aryans; while those Māls who are still found scattered throughout the Bengal delta, and who are not clearly traceable to the Māls of the hills, are either the descendants of isolated and conservative fragments of race, or of those members of it who tried to follow the example of the Bāgdis,

[1] R. C. Dutt—"The Aboriginal Elements in the Population of Bengal" in the Calcutta Review, 1882.

after the latter had become constituted as a recognized and exclusive caste, and therefore failed."[1]

Family chronicle about the origin of the Malla Rajas

The contentions of Dutt and Oldham find further corroboration from the equally concocted legendary history of the Malla house based on genealogical papers preserved by the Vishnupur Raj family and mentioned by O'Malley in his old Bankura District Gazetteer. It is significant that this story varies materially from the pundit's chronicle given in the Statistical Account of Burdwan and the Annals of Rural Bengal by W. W. Hunter: "In the year 102 of the Bengali era, i.e., 695 A.D., a prince of one of the royal houses of Northern India made a pilgrimage with his wife to the shrine of Jagannath in Puri. While on his way thither, he halted in the midst of a great forest at the village of Lāugrām, 6 miles from Kotālpur, and there left his wife, who was about to give birth to a child, in the house of a Brāhman named Panchānan after arranging that a Kāyasth named Bhagirath Guha should look after her. He then proceeded on his way and a few days afterwards his wife gave birth to a son. The mother and child remained at Lāugrām in the care of the Kāyasth, and when the boy reached the age of 7 years, the Brāhman employed him as a cowherd. One day, when overcome with fatigue, he had fallen asleep under a tree, two huge cobras, raising their hoods above the sleeper's face, shaded him from the rays of the sun till they were startled away by the approach of Panchānan searching for the boy. Impressed at this wonderful sight, the Brāhman augured that it foretold the future greatness of the boy. . . . Another sign of the greatness in store for him was soon forthcoming; for one day, while fishing with other boys of the village, he caught gold bricks instead of fish. He now received the education of a warrior, and when he was only 15 years old, had no equal in wrestling in all the country round. His skill in this manly art endeared him to an aboriginal ruler called the Rājā of Panchamgarh, and earned for him the sobriquet of Adi Malla, the original or unique wrestler.

"Adi Malla soon became a chieftain owing to the favour of the Rājā of Padampur, a place near the modern village and police outpost of Jaypur, 8 miles from Lāugrām. This Rājā gave a feast to all the Brāhmans round about, to which Panchānan went accompanied by Adi Malla. The boy, being a cowherd, was not allowed to eat with the Brāhmans, but sat outside in the courtyard. The Rājā, attracted by his beauty, held an umbrella over his head to protect him from the sun and rain, whereupon the Brāhmans declared that, since the Rājā himself held the umbrella over him, the boy was destined to become a king. He was then invested with the ensigns of Rājāship and the Rājā made him a grant of Lāugrām and some villages in its vicinity. . . . An opportunity for extending his

[1] W. B. Oldham—Some Historical and Ethnical Aspects of the Burdwan District, Calcutta, 1894.

small domains soon occurred, when a neighbouring chief, Pratāp Nārāyan of Jotbihār, withheld the tribute due to his suzerain, the Rājā of Padampur. Adi Malla successfully waged war against him and annexed his territories. Adi Malla reigned in Lāugrām for 33 years and is known to this day as the Bāgdi Rājā, a designation which seems to show that the district was then inhabited by aboriginal races, over whom he established his rule. He was succeeded by his son Jay Malla, who . . . having extended his dominions on all sides, removed the capital to Bishnupur."[1]

O'Malley then mentions the fragmentary accounts of the reigns of the fourth ruler of the line, Kālu Malla, the sixth, Kāu Malla, the seventh, Jhāu Malla and the eighth, Sur Malla, which do not, however, fail to indicate the steadily expanding borders of the Malla kingdom. The names of the forty chieftains following Sur Malla have not been cited by O'Malley as "their reigns are barren in interest". With Dhār Hāmbir, the 49th ruler, who, according to the family chronicles, is said to have flourished in 993 B.S. (1586 A.D.), we emerge for the first time from the uncertain realms of wishful thinking into the concrete domain of dispassionate history.

From the above names of the Malla rulers, a novel conclusion has recently been drawn by an author which throws further light on the ancestry of the Vishnupur house.[2] He points out that Ādi Malla's date of birth being 695 A.D. according to the family chronicles, Kālu Malla, Kāu Malla and Jhāu Malla, the fourth, the sixth and the seventh king respectively, must have lived during the ninth and the tenth centuries of the Christian era when such names—palpably of aboriginal extraction—were unthinkable in a royal family claiming descent from North Indian Kshatriya ancestors.

The striking anomalies between the two legendary histories also merit careful consideration. The pundit's chronicle gives the name of the founder of the line as Raghunāth Singh or Raghunāth Raja or Ādi Malla; the family chronicle does not mention Ādi Malla by any other name. The pundit's chronicle names the second ruler as Jai Malla, where it tallies with the other chronicle, but it states that the eighteenth ruler, Jagat Malla, removed the royal seat from Lāugrām to Vishnupur. The family papers, on the other hand, point out that Jai Malla, the second ruler so shifted the capital. The pundit's chronicle also places Bir Hāmbir as the 48th king of the line while the family chronicle makes him the 50th king—Dhār Hāmbir, his father, being 49th in the order of descent. All these serious discrepancies militate against the authenticity of either of the chronicles and considerably reduce their worth as dependable historical documents.

[1] L.S.S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. pp. 23-24.

[2] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. pp. 18-19.

From legend to history: Dhar Hambir

The first Malla king of Vishnupur who emerged from the twilight of legends into the objectivity of recorded history is Dhar Hambir, described in the family chronicle as the 48th ruler of the dynasty. Curiously, his name does not find any mention in the pundit's chronicle. According to O'Malley's re-statement of the family chronicle, Dhar Hambir flourished in the year 993 B.S. or 1586 A.D.[1] corresponding to the 31st year of reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar.

Mughal expedition

In April 1590, Raja Man Singh, Akbar's general and governor of the *Subāh* of Bihar, set out for the conquest of Orissa by the route of Bhagalpur and Burdwan. Leaving Burdwan, the Raja encamped at Jahanabad (modern Arambagh in Hooghly district) on the frontiers of the then Orissa which included most of the present district of Midnapur as also some south-western and western parts of the present Bankura district. Qutlu Khan Lohani, the Afghan ruler of North Orissa (whose name is frequently associated with the remains of a fort near the village of Kotulpur) sent up a large force to the fort of Raipur,[2] some fifty miles west of the Mughal camp. Man Singh sent an advance division of his army, under the leadership of his son Jagat Singh, to meet the Afghans. Despite the advice of the loyal "landholder Hamir", who also helped Jagat Singh with men, the latter did not take any serious notice of the enemy's moves. As a result, while "the inexperienced youth" Jagat Singh was drunk and asleep, the enemy surprised his camp and defeated him "Hamir brought away that infatuated young man and took him to his quarters at Bishanpur (Vishnupur)." A few days later, Qutlu Khan died and Man Singh eventually returned victorious from Orissa.[3]

Although the Hamir referred to in the *Akbarnāmāh*[4] has been described as a 'landholder', it seems by implication that he was a considerable landholder capable of helping the imperial forces with

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[1] L.S.S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 25.

[2] "Rāipur, a large city with a strong fortress" in the Sarkar Jelesar in Orissa (*Āin-i-Ākbari*, Vol. II. tr. by Jarrett and Sarker. Calcutta, 1949. p. 156). "Rāipur, in all probability, seems to be the *thānā* and the village of the same name in the present Bankura district, the *zemindar* of which place was, until the late 18th century, a subject of Orissa." (J. C. Price—Notes on the History of Midnapore as from the Old Records).

[3] H. Beveridge tr.—The *Ākbarnāmāh* of Abul Fazl, Vol. III. Calcutta, 1939. pp [illegible].

[4] Akbarnāmāh gives the name of this "landholder" with his seat at Vishnupur as Hamir with no prefix. J. N. Sarkar (Dacca History of Bengal, Vol. II, 1948. p. [illegible]) refers to the same person as Bir Hambir. L.S.S. O'Malley also does so but it is more logical to assume that Hamir of *Ākbarnāmāh* refers to Dhar Hambir, for no Mughal invasion took place before the year 1590. If Dhar Hambir was the first person to acknowledge the Muslim suzerainty, he could not but be in power in 1590. If Bir Hambir was the person referred to in the Akbarnāmāh by the name Hamir and if he had remained loyal to the Mughal power, there would have been no need of Jehangir's general Islam Khan's proceeding against him in 1608 A.D. (*Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi*, Vol. I. tr. by M. I. Borah. Gauhati, 1936. pp. 19-20). Moreover, O'Malley fixes the reign of Bir Hambir between 1591 and 1616 A.D.

men and that he had a well-protected fort in his native city of Vishnupur. It can also be inferred that by the time Dhar Hambir became the ruler of Vishnupur, there was a strong administration under him governing a large territory. From the evidence of Abul Fazl, it is clear that (Dhar) Hamir was a "loyal" king. Basing on the family records, O'Malley says: "we hear for the first time the acknowledgment of the suzerainty of the Muhammadan Viceroys of Bengal, to whom this prince (Dhār Hāmbir) paid an annual tribute of Rs. 1,07,000."[1]

Bir Hambir

But how long this active acknowledgment of suzerainty of the imperial power over the Vishnupur kingdom continued is a matter of conjecture. From the account given by Mirzā Nāthān in *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi*, it seems that the next ruler of the Malla family, the famous king Bir Hambir, reigned for a long time without acknowledging this overlordship.

Second Mughal expedition

In 1608 A.D., Islām Khān, Jehangir's Subahdar in Bengal sent Sheikh Kāmāl to conquer Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli and the latter marched against Bir Hamir (Bir Hambir) who submitted to the imperial forces without a fight. He also supported the Mughal army in its march against the 'zemindar' of Birbhum, Shams Khan, and against the then incumbent to Hijli's *Masnad-i-Ālā*, Salim Khan.[2] From *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi's* evidence it is not clear whether Bir Hambir's territories included lands belonging to the kingdom of Panchakoṭ or Sikharbhum (always referred to by the Muslim chroniclers and even by the early British administrators as Pachet, now called Panchet, in Purulia district). There is, however, one evidence to show that prior to this expedition, Bir Hambir must have gained possession of at least some parts of the kingdom of Panchakoṭ including the town of the same name from the traditional Hindu ruling family of Sikharbhum. Writing about the fort of Panchakoṭ, H. Coupland said: "The date of the fort is more or less definitely fixed by two of its gates, . . . on which there are duplicate inscriptions in the Bengali character referring to a Shri Vira Hamira, and giving the date Samvat 1657 or 1659, i.e. about

[1] O'Malley—loc. cit.

[2] *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi* (Vol. I. tr. by M. I. Borah. Gauhati, 1939. pp. 19-20) gives the names of three kingdoms and three '*zemindars*' but explicitly associates only Salim Khan with Hijli and leaves the association of other two '*zemindārs*' with two other 'kingdoms' entirely to our guess. But Bir Hambir, so far as we know, was the king of Vishnupur, which place fails to find any mention in Mirza Nathan's account, making it more enigmatic. There is, however, a clue in the account about Shams Khan's seat of authority. But it is difficult to locate the 'Darni Hill' where Shams Khan's seat was supposed to have been located. J. N. Sarkar (Dacca History of Bengal, Vol. II, 1948. p. 249) associates Bir Hambir with the zemindary of Birbhum—an association not supported by any historical record. Moreover, Birbhum, until the arrival of the British, was ruled by an Afghan house. He also associates Shams Khan with Panchet, which, so far as we know, was never under the rule of any Muslim family. There is, however, reason to believe that Bir Hambir was the ruler of Panchet at the time of Sheikh Kamal's expedition.

1600 A.D. Vira Hamira is apparently the Bir Hamvira of the Bishnupur Raj . . . It is a matter for question whether the fort was built by him and subsequently captured by the Panchet Raja, or by the Panchet Raja for his own protection against Vir Hamira and perhaps also against the Muhammadans. The reason for its abandonment is not known."[1] Indeed the legends connected with the Malla family of Vishnupur credit Bir Hambir with extensive conquests and subjugation of the kings of neighbouring territories. The claim made in some of the documents of later ages, belonging to the Malla family, now preserved in the record room of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Vishnupur Branch, that the Malla kings held their sway over territories extending from the Selaye or the Silabati in the south to the border of Birbhum in the north, minus the territories belonging to the Burdwan Raj and from the borders of Mandaran in the east to Panchakoṭ in the west might be highly exaggerated, but this much is certain that from the days of Dhar Hambir the Malla family became a territorially significant power and the expansion of their kingdom reached its height in the reign of Bir Singh II, during whose reign the Mallas probably held effective authority over a major part of the territories now forming the district of Bankura.

Tradition has it that Bir Hambir, before his conversion to Vaishnavism, was an unscrupulous and tyrannous ruler. The *Bhakti-ratnākara* of Narahari Chakravarti describes him as "the most wicked king in India" and laments the fact that "there is none to punish this sinner."[2] The *Prema-vilāsa* of Nityananda Das (*alias* Balaram Das) and the *Bhakti-ratnākara* of Narahari Chakravarti relate that Shrinivasa Acharya and other devotees left Brindāvan for Navadwip with a number of Vaishnava manuscripts which were robbed on the way by Bir Hambir who had been told by his astrologers that two cart-loads of rare valuables were crossing his territory along a specified route. The news of the looting killed Krishnadas Kaviraj, author of the *Chaitanya Charitāmrita*, but Shrinivasa Acharya was made of sterner stuff and he persuaded Bir Hambir to see him and so moved him by reading the *Bhāgavata* that the 'wicked king' immediately became a convert to Vaishnavism and gave his preceptor rich endowments of land and money. The credit for such a sudden change of heart may not be attributed to Shrinivasa Acharya alone as it appears that even before his conversion, the Vaishnava text *Bhāgavata* used to be read out regularly in his court by one Vyas Chakravarti whose descendants still live in Vishnupur town.[3] Legend

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[1] H. Coupland—Bengal District Gazetteers: Manbhum. Calcutta, 1911. p. [illegible]. The inscriptions were first reported by J. D. Beglar in the Report of the *Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. VIII.

[2] Narahari Chakravarti—*Bhakti-ratnākara*, 7/61.

[3] Haridas Das—*Madhyayugiya Gauḍiya Sāhityer Bhowgolic O' Aitihāsic Abhidhan.* Navadwip, undated.

has it that Bir Hambir became a thoroughly changed man after adopting the new faith and used to spend much of his time in performing Vaishnava rites in the temple of Shri Rādhāraman on the bank of the Kālindi tank. Two Vaishnava songs are attributed to him, the originals of which are given in the *Bhakti-ratnākara*. Tradition says that he introduced the worship of Madan Mohan in his capital city and erected the quaint structure known as *Rās-mancha* where all the deities of Vishnupur used to be exhibited during the annual *Rās* festival. He is also credited with the introduction of the worship of Kalachand, another Vaishnava deity, in Vishnupur, whose laterite temple was erected in 1656 by Raja Raghunath Singh. From all these references, it would appear that the reign of Bir Hambir fell between 1591 and 1616 A.D.

Bir Singh I and Raghunath Singh I

There is some uncertainty as to the Malla prince who succeeded Bir Hambir. O'Malley, in the old Bankura District Gazetteer, states that "Bir Hambir *is said to have been* (italics, Editor's) succeeded by Raghunath Singh", thereby entertaining some doubt about the actual successor. The only dependable inscriptional evidence on this point relates to the Malleswara temple at Vishnupur which mentions the builder to be one Bir Singh (and not Bir Hambir) and the date of construction as 1622 A.D. Obviously, Bir Hambir was then dead and a suggestion has been made by certain scholars that the mention of Bir Singh in this inscription as a Malla king reigning in 1622 A.D. may be attributed to the fact that Raghunath Singh I, who was on the throne subsequently, must have changed Bir Hambir's name to that of Bir Singh as, during Raghunath's time, the Kshatriya title 'Singh' had acquired an honorific significance. This theory is not tenable inasmuch as Raghunath Singh I invariably mentioned him as the son of Bir Hambir (and *not* of Bir Singh) in the inscriptions of the Shyam Ray, Jor-Bangla and Kalachand temples in Vishnupur constructed during his reign.[1] There is no reason why Raghunath Singh I should not have named his father uniformly as Bir Singh in all his inscriptions instead of making a solitary reference about it only in the Malleswara temple. Had there, again, been no prince reigning between Bir Hambir and Raghunath Singh I, the latter should have occupied the Malla throne from 1616 to at least 1656 A.D., a period of 40 years, which may seem to be too long although there is no concrete evidence to the contrary.

The above hypothesis of there being another king of the Malla line, Bir Singh I,--unnamed so far—who presumably ruled in between Bir Hambir and Raghunath Singh I poses a problem as to the relationship between Bir Hambir, Bir Singh I and Raghunath Singh I. The last-named king was certainly not the son of Bir Singh I as is proved from the inscriptional evidence cited already. The most plausible

[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Reproduction of the inscriptions on the Shyam Ray, Jor-Bangla and Kalachand temples faces p. 183.

explanation to resolve this difficulty would be to describe Bir Singh I as the eldest eligible son of Bir Hambir who preceded Raghunath Singh I on the Malla throne.

Raghunath Singh I succeeded Bir Singh I and his reign fell approximately between 1643 (the date of construction of the Shyam Ray temple, the earliest of the extant shrines built by him) and 1656 A.D. when he erected the last of his extant temples dedicated to Kalachand. During his regime, the Malla power consolidated itself and entered on its palmiest days as may be judged from the noble monuments left behind by this prince in his capital city. The Shyam Ray, Jor-Bangla and Kalachand temples set up by him in 1643, 1655 and 1656 A.D. respectively amply testify to the high level of architectural and sculptural excellence attained by the temple-builders of his time. Vishnupur was gaining in status as a seat of Sanskrit learning since the days of Bir Hambir and the flowering in this sphere received further impetus during the benign rule of Raghunath Singh I. The local school of North Indian classical music took a firm hold in Vishnupur largely through the patronage of this enlightened monarch. Against these intellectual attainments of the Malla capital, may be set forth a slight diminution in the political prestige of the ruling family inasmuch as it had, by then, become, at least on paper, a power subservient to the Muslim rulers of Bengal. It must, however, be said that besides remitting the stipulated annual tributes to the Mughal viceroys, the Malla kings did not submit themselves to any outside interference in matters concerning their internal administration.

An interesting story is told about Raghunath Singh I who, having once defaulted in the payment of his revenue, was carried away as a prisoner to the court of the Mughal viceroy. There he had an occasion to ridicule the performance of sixteen soldiers escorting a solitary horse, known for its savage temper. The Nawab thereupon challenged him to ride the horse which he did with facility and covered within nine hours a distance equivalent to eight days' journey. Pleased with his extraordinary skill, the Muslim viceroy conferred on him the title of 'Singh', remitted the arrears of his revenue and allowed him to return to Vishnupur.

Bir Singh II

The next prince to ascend the Malla throne was Bir Singh II who built the present fort of Vishnupur at a site selected, it is said, according to an auspicious sign. He was an expert in falconry and one day when out hunting, he set his hawk on a heron only to witness the unusual spectacle of the heron striking down the hawk. This deed of singular valour on the part of a bird as gentle as a heron was interpreted to indicate a spot, revealed by divine dispensation, where a fort could be built. It appears, however, from scanty ruins still visible *in situ* that the previous Malla fort of Vishnupur was located in the area now known as Sānkhāripārā. Bir Singh II

is also credited with the excavation of eight big tanks called Lal-bandh, Krishna-bandh, Gantat-bandh, Yamuna-bandh, Kalindi-bandh, Shyam-bandh, Poka-bandh (previously called Bir-bandh) and Chowkhan-bandh (now silted up) which not only relieved the chronic shortage of water in Vishnupur, but also formed a part of its fortifications. He was also a noted patron of architecture and the temple dedicated to Lalji, one of the finest *ek-ratna* laterite temples in Vishnupur, was erected by him in 1658 A.D. A *sikhara* temple at Bikrampur in Onda police station and two *āṭ-chālā* temples at Tejpal (a suburb of Vishnupur) and Sabrakon in Taldangra police station were also built by him in 1659, 1671 and 1676 A.D. respectively. The Madan Gopal and Murali Mohan temples at Vishnupur, both built in 1665 A.D., are attributed, according to the respective inscriptions on them, to the queens of Bir Singh II named Siromani and Chuḍāmani. Bir Singh II was also a stern administrator for, hearing that Moniram Adhurya of Maliara was oppressing his people, he marched against him and vanquished him in a dour battle. Another story about this king does not present him in such a favourable light for, it is said, he ordered all his sons to be walled up alive. The youngest, Durjan Singh, escaped and was kept in hiding by the palace servants. Legend has it that the end of the Raja was a miserable one for he allegedly committed suicide in bitter remorse for having killed a Brahmin boy. From extant inscriptional evidence the reign of Bir Singh II fell approximately between 1656 and 1677 A.D.

Durjan Singh

Nothing much is known about Durjan Singh, the next king, except for the fact that in 1694 A.D. he built the Madan Mohan temple in Vishnupur renowned for its terracotta sculpture. Durjan Singh appears to have ruled from 1678 to 1694 A.D. whereupon he was succeeded by Raghunath Singh II who, apparently, occupied the Malla throne between 1694 and 1730 A.D. No temple is attributed to him but this prince was a great patron of music and it was chiefly through his encouragement that the Vishnupur school of Indian classical music reached its finest phase of development. He also did not lack military prowess inasmuch as he overran the Chetoabarda pargana in Midnapur for the Muslims, who, it is said, had not been able to conquer it themselves and had, therefore, sought the assistance of the Raja. Popular legend connects Raghunath Singh II with a courtesan called Lal Bai whom he procured after defeating Sova Singh of Chetoabarda. His extreme infatuation for this Muslim girl led to court conspiracies resulting in his eventual downfall. At one stage of the love-affair, Raghunath, it is said, had edibles cooked by his Muslim mistress for the consumption of the Hindu populace of Vishnupur which was too much for them to bear and he was killed, so goes the story, at the instance of the eldest of the married queens of the Raja who, strangely, immolated herself on his funeral

Raghunath Singh II

pyre and has since been known as *pati-ghātini sati* or a chaste wife who had murdered her husband. According to popular belief, Lal Bai was drowned in the Lal-bandh which still bears her name.

Gopal Singh

The decline of the Malla power had actually started from the time of Raghunath Singh II and the process was accelerated by a succession of inefficient rulers engaged mostly in internecine quarrels, extensive Maratha raids in the Malla territory and the rise of big neighbouring zemindars like the Burdwan Raj. Gopal Singh, the next ruler, appears to have been on the Malla throne between 1720 and 1745 A.D. He was a pious prince more devoted to Vaishnava rituals than sound administration for which most of his predecessors were noted. It was characteristic of this Raja to issue orders that all his subjects should count their beads and repeat *hari-nām* (the name of God) every evening at sunset. This enforced prayer is still remembered in Vishnupur as *Gopāl Singher Begār* (lit., compulsory labour enforced by Gopal Singh). In his time, the Marathas under Bhaskar Rao attacked Vishnupur which was for all intents and purposes a strongly fortified city. Legend has it that after his troops had made a spirited sally, Gopal Singh retreated within the fort and asked both soldiers and citizens to join in prayers to Madan Mohan, the city-God, for deliverance from the ordeal. The entreaties of the stricken populace were, it is said, heard by Madan Mohan, who, according to popular belief, personally appeared on the scene and fired two big cannons and repelled the invaders. The truth perhaps was that the Maratha cavalry, carrying light artillery, could not penetrate the stubborn defences and withdrew after a while only to ravage the countryside extensively. Three temples to the south-west of Lal-bandh, known by the joint name of Jor-Mandir, are attributed to this king who, according to inscriptional evidence, set them up around 1726 A.D.

Krishna Singh

The name of Krishna Singh is noticed from two inscriptions, one in his own name on the Radha Gobinda temple at Vishnupur built in 1729 A.D. and the other on the Radha Madhab temple, also at Vishnupur, built by his queen, Chuḍāmani, in 1737 A.D. Both these dates fall within the reign of his father, Gopal Singh, and there is nothing to prove conclusively that Krishna Singh ever occupied the Malla throne or undertook any exploits worthy of mention. It is possible that the temples mentioned above were built when he was the crown-prince. If that be so, the reign of Gopal Singh probably extended to the time when Chaitanya Singh succeeded him in or about 1758 A.D.

Chaitanya Singh

The year in which Chaitanya Singh came to the Malla throne is uncertain. The inscription on the Radha Shyam temple, built by him in 1758 A.D., would testify that he continued to be the king at least from that year, if not earlier, till the Mallabhum estates were sold away in 1806 A.D. for arrears of revenue. Chaitanya

Singh's reign was troublesome in the extreme because of the internecine quarrels as also because Mallabhum, during his time, had completely ceased to be the aloof and independent kingdom that it used to be, having come very much within the vortex of contemporary politics regulated mostly by the Nawabs of Murshidabad and their satellites with the activities of the English East India Company and the emergence of big rival landlords like the Burdwan Raj looming ominously in the background. In fact, the reign of Chaitanya Singh was so much plagued by these extrinsic factors that it would be more appropriate to deal with the later history of the Malla house as a part and parcel of the broader current of contemporary politics of Bengal falling within the Modern Period.

MODERN PERIOD

The advent of the East India Company: Foundation of Calcutta

In 1651-52 the British had obtained permission from Sultan Shuja, the then Subahdar of Bengal, to carry on trade throughout the province of Bengal free of duty on payment of a consolidated fee of Rs. 3,000 per annum. During the second viceroyalty of Shaista Khan (1679-1688), William Hedges arrived in Bengal as the Governor and Agent of the English East India Company. He found that various restrictions had been put by local officials on the trade of the English in violation of the *nishān* obtained by the Company from Sultan Shuja. With a view to removing these difficulties, he went to Dacca himself and saw the Nawab and the Diwan but his efforts were fruitless. Although a great believer in the efficacy of negotiations, William Hedges, in this instance, became convinced that the English could not gain their point unless the superiority of British arms over those of the Mughals was conclusively proved. Hostilities were, therefore, started, though not with immediate favourable results for the English; they won the first action against the Nawab's forces at Hooghly in October 1686, but their factories at Dacca, Malda, Patna and Kasimbazar were seized and the properties confiscated. Towards the close of 1686, Shaista Khan assembled a large force close to Hooghly whereupon the Agent and Council of the Company decided to vacate Hooghly and move down to the village of Sutānuṭi, on the present site of Calcutta. The British could not stay there for long and had to retreat, under the guidance of their Agent, Job Charnock, to Hijli. The situation, however, eased a little through negotiations between Sir John Child, the Governor of Bombay, and the Emperor Aurangzib, as a result of which Job Charnock was able to return to Uluberia in the present district of Howrah. Ultimately, peace was restored in 1690 and Ibrahim Khan, who succeeded Shaista Khan as the Subahdar of Bengal, made it up with the English and the latter came back to Sutanuti on the 24th August 1690 which may be taken as the date of foundation of the city of Calcutta.

Friction between the British and Siraj-ud-daulah

On Nawab Alivardi Khan's death in April 1756, his grandson Siraj-ud-daulah (a son of one of his daughters) succeeded him and very soon involved himself in hostilities with the British. The affairs of the East India Company in Bengal were then under the control of a Governor and a Council. Siraj-ud-daulah's grievances against the British were chiefly (i) the unauthorized fortifications they had raised in Calcutta; (ii) the misuse of the *dustucks* or passes issued by the officers of the Company, and (iii) the asylum given by them to Krishna Ballav, the son of Raja Raj Ballav, an officer of the Nawab of Bengal. Of these reasons the second (viz. the abuse of the *dustucks*) had been bothering the indigenous authorities for long as not only the Company's trade but even the private trade of the servants of the Company and their friends was thus being carried on duty-free. In June 1756, Siraj-ud-daulah marched against the British and won a heady victory by capturing Calcutta. But the situation was reversed in no time in January 1757, when Calcutta was retaken by the British forces under Admiral Watson and Colonel Robert Clive. At this point, the Nawab entered into a treaty with the British which can only be treated as a temporary truce inasmuch as the Battle of Plassey was fought later in the same year and Siraj-ud-daulah lost his throne. Mir Jafar Khan, who was the commander-in-chief of the Bengal army under Siraj-ud-daulah and who had conspired with the British to bring about the Nawab's downfall, was now made the Nawab of Bengal. In lieu of this privilege, Mir Jafar had promised to pay vast sums of money to the Company, to its armed forces, as also to the individual members of its Council. By the end of August 1757, he had paid a total sum of Rs. 10,765,737 out of the total commitment of Rs. 22,700,000. Failing to pay the outstanding amount quickly, Mir Jafar had to assign the revenues of the districts of Burdwan, Nadia and Hooghly to the Company. It, however, became clear very soon that these districts were being ruined by the extortionate manner in which the Company was collecting the revenues and Mir Jafar sought to redeem these districts by making over his jewels to the Company as a security against the amount still due.[1]

Abuse of the *dustucks* and local resistance to it

An interesting event occurred about this time which throws some light on the history of the present district of Bankura and the territories adjoining it. "In 1755 Raja Tilakchand of Burdwan stopped the Company's business within his jurisdiction by putting *chowkis* upon all the Company's factories there and imprisoning the Company's *gomastās*. (The cause of the misunderstanding was this: Ramjiban Kaviraj, a *gomastā* of the Burdwan Raja, owed Rs. 6,357 to Mr. John Wood. The latter, failing to secure the payment of the amount, laid a complaint against Ramjiban in the Major's Court,

[1] W. K. Firminger, ed.—The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons: Introduction, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1917. p. cxlii.

and having obtained a warrant of sequestration against him, he sealed up the Raja's house and effects in Calcutta. This gave a great offence to the Raja, who immediately ordered the stoppage of Company's trade within his dominions by imprisoning their *gomastās* and putting *chowkis* upon their factories. Consultations, April 1, 1755 A.D.). The Council regarded this as an extremely insolent and unwarrantable step and decided that the President should prepare an address to the Nawab, and send up a *chubdār* immediately with it, complaining of the Raja's insolence and unwarranted proceedings in stopping the Honourable Company's business transacted in his Provinces and seizing their effects, and that he insisted (*sic.*) upon a proper reprimand being sent to the Raja and the usual currency given to our affairs at the Aurangs situated in his jurisdictions. This representation to the Nawab proved effective, as he immediately ordered the Burdwan Raja to remove all restraints upon the Company's trade. (Text of the Nawab's letter to the Burdwan Raja: Consultations, May 1755 A.D.). In 1757 some Zamindars near Maldah and Sunamukhi ill-treated the Company's *gomastās* and peons there, and the Raja of Bishnupur (in Bankura District) severely exacted the usual duties from the English. The Council wrote to Mr. Scrafton, the Company's Resident at Murshidabad, directing him to represent the complaints at the Nawab's *darbār* and to insist on those Zamindars being punished in an exemplary manner."[1] The reason behind such actions of the zemindars and local chieftains was that not only the Company's European servants, but their Indian *gomastās* as well flouted the law of the land on the strength of the *dustucks* given to the Company. Bolts' comments, quoted by K. K. Datta, are quite revealing on this point: "After these the Gomasthas so well availed themselves of this new acquired power, that after the Company by their substitutes, had made their first Nawob Jaffer Ali Khan, in the year 1757, their black gomasthas in every district assumed a jurisdiction which even the authority of the Rajas and Zemindars in the country durst not withstand."[2]

The incursions of Ali Gauhar into Bengal

In 1759, Alamgir II headed an empire which existed only in name. He was a mere tool in the hands of his minister Ghiyasuddin Khan who bore the title of Umaid-ul-mulk. The Emperor's eldest son Ali Gauhar, later known as Shah Alam, grew impatient of the irksome control of the minister and fled to Rohilkhand and began to raise a force. As a preliminary step to assert his authority, he resolved to take possession of Bengal and Bihar and in this project he managed to secure the support of Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh. He laid siege to the city of Patna, but being unable to penetrate its

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[1] Kalikinkar Datta—Studies in the History of Bengal Subah, 1740-70, Vol. I. Calcutta University, 1936. pp. 296-97.

[2] ibid. p. 305.

defences, fell back once more into Oudh.[1] The British, under Colonel Clive, had, at this juncture, decided to assist Mir Jafar Khan against this prince from Delhi and, accordingly, sent help to his governor in Bihar, Ramnarayan, at Patna. Before leaving Bengal in 1760, Clive appointed Major Caillaud of the Madras Service to command the Company's forces in the Bengal Presidency. Major Caillaud was directed (by Clive) to proceed first to Murshidabad and effect a junction with the Nawab's troops and then to proceed to Patna for opposing the advance of Ali Gauhar who had again taken the offensive.[2] In the campaigns that followed, Caillaud succeeded in relieving Patna and the *Shāhzādā* had to retire finally from Bihar.

About this time, Umaid-ul-mulk, the imperial minister, caused the Emperor to be put to death and proclaimed a younger son as Emperor under the title of Shah Jahan Sanee. As soon as he heard the news, prince Ali Gauhar, on the advice of his counsellors, caused himself also to be proclaimed as Emperor under the title of Shah Alam. The conduct of Nawab Mir Jafar Khan and the English in opposing him could now be construed as rebellion against the lawful sovereign of the country, but they proceeded in their chosen course.

In March 1760, a large Maratha force had occupied Midnapur and another detachment was in the neighbourhood of Burdwan. These incursions were engineered to help Shah Alam in his campaign against the Nawab Mir Jafar Khan. The Emperor, with a view to evading pursuit by Major Caillaud and Miran, changed the direction of his march when he arrived at the foot of the Kharagpur hills and decided to cut across the hilly country, thereby by-passing the fortress of Teliagarhi.[3] Major Caillaud and Miran therefore changed their course and pursued the Emperor. While this was happening, Shew Bhutt, the Maratha chief, had defeated Khooshal Singh, the Nawab's officer in charge of the Midnapur province, and made himself master of the area and rushed troops to Khirpai and Vishnupur. From Khirpai he threatened Calcutta and Hooghly and from Vishnupur he commanded Burdwan with a view to joining the Emperor in the event of his advancing towards Murshidabad. These manoeuvres caused considerable alarm at Murshidabad and Calcutta. It was suggested by the British that the Nawab should send out a force to Burdwan to protect the district. He agreed and asked for the support of a European detachment under Captain Spear.[4] The request was granted and the Nawab's son-in-law, Mir Muhammad

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[1] Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, ed. by H. H. Dodwell. p. 153.
[2] Ibid. p. 164.
[3] Capt. Arthur Broome—History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1850. p. 288.
[4] Ibid. pp. 289-90.

Kasim Ali Khan, was placed at the head of this force.[1] But instead of ordering him to proceed to Burdwan and drive out the Marathas from Vishnupur, Mir Jafar Khan ordered Mir Kasim Ali Khan to halt with his force at Katwa as a defensive measure against a possible attack on Murshidabad. He was at last prevailed upon to send the force to Burdwan towards the middle of March 1760. Intelligence had meanwhile been received that the Emperor had given the enemy the slip and was rapidly advancing towards Murshidabad.[2] The contingent at Burdwan was reinforced from Calcutta by Captain Fisher at the head of 200 Europeans, 300 sepoys and 4 field-pieces. Captain Maclean was returning with his detachment at that time from the Northern Circars. He reached Cuttack with his two battalions on the 21st of March 1760 where he received instructions to follow the coast road as far as Balasore and then to strike north and proceed *via* Midnapur and Khirpai to Burdwan and there place himself under the orders of Captain Spear or Major Caillaud.[3] The alignment of forces at that time was as follows: the Emperor was advancing towards Burdwan, pursued by Miran and Major Caillaud; the Nawab Mir Jafar Khan and Captain Spear were to the north of Burdwan on the Ajay river at a place about equidistant from Burdwan and Katwa; Shew Bhutt with the main body of the Marathas was at Vishnupur and Captain Maclean with his detachment was advancing northwards towards the same city. On the 1st of April 1760, the Emperor arrived within a few miles of the Nawab's forces but instead of attacking immediately he halted there. On the 4th of April, at Mangalkote on the Ajay, Major Caillaud and Miran joined the Nawab. Major Caillaud despatched 200 Europeans under Captain Fisher for the defence of Murshidabad and with the remaining force commenced his march on the 6th of April and reached Beerpur where he learnt that the Emperor was encamped 7 or 8 miles on the other side of the Damodar river and the Marathas a little beyond. On the following morning the march was resumed and the force arrived at Belkoss which was opposite the Emperor's camp. For lack of co-operation from Mir Jafar, the English, however, could not cross the river and engage the Emperor's army. The Emperor withdrew from the place, set fire to his camp and retired with his Maratha allies to Vishnupur.[4] On the 10th of April 1760, the Emperor re-crossed the Damodar higher up the river and began his retreat towards Patna. The bulk of the Maratha force went with the Emperor, under the command of Shew Bhutt in person, but some troops stayed behind at Vishnupur.[5]

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[1] ibid. p. 290.
[2] loc. cit.
[3] ibid. p. 291.
[4] ibid. p. 294.
[5] ibid. p. 295.

Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh of the Malla Raj family

The Raja of Vishnupur at that time was Chaitanya Singh who shares with Gopal Singh the fond memories of the people; for he was also a pious ruler and made large grants to Brahmins, so much so that, if a Brahmin in the kingdom had no rent-free grant, it was open to question whether he was a Brahmin at all. But the religious and retiring disposition of Chaitanya Singh made him quite unfit to deal with the troubles which now arose. He was indifferent to his public duties, spent his time in religious discussion and meditation and entrusted the affairs of the State to his favourite minister, Kamal Biswas, better known by the proud title of Chhatrapati. This minister became the *de facto* ruler of Mallabhum and Damodar Singh, a cousin of the Raja and the head of a junior branch of the house, took advantage of the situation to advance his claim to the Raj. He repaired to the Nawab's court at Murshidabad and succeeded in obtaining a strong force from Siraj-ud-daulah with which to establish his claim. This force met with an inglorious defeat at Sanghatgolā in the north of Mallabhum and Damodar Singh narrowly escaped with his life. On his return, he found Mir Jafar Khan in the place of his old patron Siraj-ud-daulah but the new Nawab was no less keen to help him and furnished him with a stronger force with which he advanced cautiously, and overcoming a feeble resistance on the way, surprised the Vishnupur fort at dead of night. Chaitanya Singh escaped with the family idol of Madan Mohan and wandered from place to place till he reached Calcutta where, it is said, he pawned the idol to Gokul Mitra of Baghbazar in order to procure the aid of Diwan Ganga Gobinda Singh[1] through whose intercession he was reinstated by the British.

The accession of Mir Kasim

When he left Bengal in February 1760, Clive handed over his office of Governor to Holwell pending arrival of Vansittart. In September 1760, Vansittart arrived in Bengal and took over charge from Holwell and within a short time removed Mir Jafar Khan from the throne and placed his son-in-law, Mir Kasim Khan, there (October 1760). As on the previous occasion, this change in the Nawabship resulted in financial gain to the Company and to its individual officers. The three districts of Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong were ceded to the Company for defraying the cost of maintenance of troops for supporting the Nawab.[2]

[1] "According to another account, Gokul Mitra bought the celebrated image of Madan Mohan from the Maharaja of Bishnupur, paying him three lakhs of rupees, and built a temple for it, the tasteful and costly architecture of which has excited the admiration of experts in Hindu art. A host of men were employed in the service of this deity—worshippers to perform the daily service, florists to supply flowers and to string garlands, priests to recite the sacred books, [illegible] to sing hymns, and other men and women too numerous to mention." (The National Magazine, October 1960. p. 393).

[2] It was agreed between Mir Kasim and the East India Company that "for all charges of the Company and of the said army and provisions for the field, etc., the lands of Burdwan, Midnapore, and Chittagong, shall be written and granted. The Company is to stand losses, and receive all profits of these

Mir Kasim clashes with the Company

Nawab Mir Kasim Khan was, however, obliged in no time to protest against the misuse of the *dustucks* or transit passes by the servants of the Company who, besides the regular concessions, claimed exemption from payment of all dues in respect of trade carried on by them even in their individual capacities or by their agents. Mir Kasim's remonstrances being of no avail, he abolished in 1763, for a space of two years, transit duties on all goods in transit, whether for import and export or for inland trade, irrespective of who carried on such business.[1] This measure deprived the Company (and its servants) of the special privilege that they were enjoying at the expense of indigenous and foreign traders of other nationalities. The high-handed reprisals of the agents of the Company, particularly of W. Ellis of Patna, led to an outbreak of hostilities and in July 1763 the Governor and Council of the Company in Bengal issued a proclamation placing Mir Jafar Khan again on the throne and declaring war against Mir Kasim. This culminated in the battle of Buxar which was fought in October 1764, and shortly afterwards, in 1765, the East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from Emperor Shah Alam. Nawab Mir Jafar Khan died in February 1765 and in the meantime, Spencer was appointed the President of the Council at Calcutta. The Council selected Najm-ud-daulah, the eldest surviving son of the late Nawab of Bengal, for succession and simultaneously imposed the condition, among others, that he must accept as his deputy or Naib-Subahdar a person nominated by the East India Company. The person named was Muhammad Reza Khan. Lord Clive returned at the head of the Company's administration in Bengal on the 3rd May 1765 and in August 1765, when he arranged to obtain the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for the Company from the Emperor by a separate agreement with the Nawab of Bengal, it was stipulated that the Nawab would accept annually a sum of *sicca* Rs. 53,86,131-9-0 as "an adequate allowance for the support of the Nizamat."[2]

Prior to these arrangements, the E. I. Company had direct control only over Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong, but with these innovations it came to exerçise full control over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Vishnupur goes under the Company's control

James Grant in his 'Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal', which was published as an appendix to the Fifth Report, gave an abstract of the *Ausil Toomār Jummā* of Bengal as settled by Raja Todar Mal from which it would appear that the estates of the Raja of Vishnupur were not situated within the *sarkār* of Madaran. In fact, Vishnupur does not occur in the *Ausil Toomār*

countries, and we will demand no more than the assignment aforesaid." Introduction to the Fifth Report....on the Affairs of the East India Company by W. K. Firminger. Vol. I. Calcutta, 1917. p. cxiv.

[1] ibid. *p.* cxvii.

[2] ibid. p. cliii.

Jummā of Todar Mal if the copy of it reproduced by Grant be accepted as authentic. But it appears from the translation of *Ain-i-Akbari* by Jarett and Sarkar that Vishnupur was included within the *sarkār* of Madaran. It appears that during the viceroyalty of Sultan Shuja, only a "fixed tribute or peshkash used to be realised from the Raja of Vishnupur."[1] At the settlement made by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, the districts of Vishnupur and Panchet were included in the *Chāklā* of Burdwan.[2] According to James Grant, the territories of the Raja of Vishnupur were converted into a zemindari soon after 1715, during the viceroyalty of Murshid Quli Khan and conferred on Gopal Singh for a sum of Rs. 1,29,803 payable annually by way of revenue.[3] Vishnupur and Panchet, says Grant, should have come under the control of the Company in 1760 when Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong were ceded to it but actually did not on account of a fraud allegedly practised on the Company. He must have formed his opinion on the basis of the fact that Vishnupur and Panchet were included in the *Chāklā* of Burdwan at that time but should have been transferred to the Company when Burdwan was ceded. The conclusion seems to be based on incorrect data. According to Walter Firminger, the *sanad* granted by Mir Kasim for the cessation of Burdwan to the Company ran thus in the official translation: "To the Zemindars, Canoongoes, Talookdars, Tenants, Husbandmen, and chief Villagers of the Pergunnah of Burdwan, etc., the zemindaree of the Raja Tilluck Chand, in the districts of the Subah of Bengal, etc."[4] It is thus clear that what was meant to be ceded was the zemindari of the Raja of Burdwan and not the *Chāklā* of Burdwan. Vishnupur and Panchet were, therefore, rightfully withheld from the Company in 1760. The lands of the Raja of Vishnupur thus came under the control of the East India Company in 1765 only after the Company acquired the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the Emperor Shah Alam.

On the 30th January, 1767 John Graham, the Resident at Midnapur, wrote a letter to Ensign John Fergusson, the first paragraph of which was as follows:

The subjugation of semi-independent chiefs

"To the westward of Midnapore there is a very large tract of country comprehended within the limits of the Province, but of which the Zemindars, taking advantage of their situation, support themselves in a kind of independence. The continuance of this independence is judged to be highly unsuitable in the present situation of our Government, and is also thought to obstruct commercial intercourse, which used heretofore to subsist between the Bengali Provinces and the districts westward of the Hills. The party, which

[1] F. W. Robertson—Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura, 1917-1924. Calcutta, 1926. p. 28.

[2] loc. cit.

[3] loc. cit.

[4] W. K. Firminger—op. cit. p. cxxxiii.

you are appointed to command of, is destined, therefore, to proceed against these Zemindars, with a view to reduce them to a proper subjection to our Government on payment of a just revenue, to enforce their obedience to the authority of the Resident of Midnapore, and to encourage, if possible, the merchants of the Western districts to open again their wonted communications with these provinces."[1]

Ensign Fergusson, accordingly, started with a detachment to explore the countryside to the west of Midnapur and to reduce the zemindars of those parts to submission.[2] The landlords of Dharanda and Karnagar were ordered to accompany him with their own militia. The first to be subjugated was the zemindar of Jhargram. He did put up some resistance but was defeated by the Company's troops. From Jhargram Ensign Fergusson proceeded to the police station of Balarampur. Here he awaited the receipt of communications from local zemindars, two of whom were of Supur and Ambikanagar in the modern Bankura district. On the 14th February 1767, Fergusson wrote to John Graham informing him of the sums for which he (Fergusson) had settled the parganas of Ramgarh, Sankhacoolia, Jambani, Jatbunia and Jhargram. It appears that at this time the quarrel between Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh of the Vishnupur Raj reached its height, Damodar having taken possession of some villages near Ambikanagar. Fergusson sent sepoys to Ambikanagar in search of Damodar Singh causing the zemindar of that pargana to retire into neighbouring jungles making it impossible for Fergusson to contact him.

Fergusson, however, got in touch with the zemindars of Raipur and Phulkusma whose estates lay, at that time, within the Burdwan district but they had avoided making their submission and paying an equitable rent at Burdwan. John Graham, accordingly, directed Fergusson also to reduce the zemindars of Raipur and Phulkusma to obedience and to settle their lands with them if they agreed to pay a fixed annual land revenue. These landlords, however, claimed that their territories belonged to the Subah of Bengal and not Orissa and produced documents to that effect signed by Goodwin, the Company's official at Burdwan. They apparently succeeded in proving their point as they were left out of the settlement proceedings of Fergusson. They and the chief of Simlapal were thus allowed to pay their revenues at Burdwan through the zemindar of Bagri.

The Chhatna Raj also virtually lost its independent status through the same levelling activities of the Company. Fergusson, however,

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[1] W. K. Firminger, ed.—Bengal District Records: Midnapore, 1763-1767, Vol. I.

[2] Quoted from the above by J. C. Price in Notes on the History of Midnapore, Chapter III. The account of the submission of various zemindars and landlords by Fergusson is based on J. C. Price (*supra*, Ch. III) who summarizes the correspondence edited by W. K. Firminger.

came across a peculiar difficulty in the case of Chhatna. It appears that the Faujdar of Panchet, had, on an order received from the Resident at Murshidabad, demanded revenue from the zemindar of Chhatna. Fergusson had, therefore, to eliminate the Faujdar of Panchet before he could settle accounts with the chieftain of the place. The matter had to be referred eventually by George Vansittart, Resident at Midnapur at that time, to Francis Sykes, the Resident at Murshidabad. Vansittart claimed that the Chhatna pargana was included in the Subah of Orissa and the *Chāklā* of Midnapur and requested Sykes to examine the papers at Murshidabad relating to Nawab Shujauddin's reign.[1] Sykes replied that, as the Midnapur province was looked upon as part of the Company's own possessions, it would be advisable not to enter into any examination of the pretensions of the Faujdar of 'Pacheat' but to direct him to withdraw his people and leave the revenue matters of these lands entirely to Vansittart.

It would thus appear that even as late as 1767 there were areas to the west of Midnapur district which had been ceded to the Company in 1760 but were not subject to the control of the Resident at Midnapur. There was also a confusion as to the respective territorial jurisdictions of the Residents at Midnapur and Murshidabad, the latter being in supervisory charge of all the *Diwānī* lands. Fergusson was evidently able to integrate the zemindaries of Supur, Ambikanagar and Chhatna, all within the modern district of Bankura, into the *Chākla* of Midnapur but the lands of the Raja of Vishnupur were apparently not included in this *Chākla* at that time.

As has already been stated, the Vishnupur estates came under the control of the Company with its acquisition of the *Diwāni* in 1765. Vishnupur figures in the list of districts forming the *Diwāni* of Bengal mentioned by James Grant in his 'Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal.'[2] According to the arrangements obtaining then, the collection of revenue of the lands forming the *Diwāni* portion was supervised by Muhammad Reza Khan and his colleagues whose work was supervised and controlled by the Company's Resident at Murshidabad. It appears from a statement dated the 10th April 1770, forwarded by Richard Becher, Resident at Murshidabad, that one Gulam Mustupha was acting as the *amil* or collector of revenues in respect of Vishnupur for the Bengali year 1176, corresponding to the period from the 11th April 1769 to the 10th April 1770, and that the net revenue required to be paid into the Government treasury for that year amounted to *sicca* Rs. 2,50,501. The amount actually collected was *sicca* Rs. 2,40,851. For the Bengali year 1177, corresponding to the period from the 11th

[1] Firminger—Bengal District Records, Midnapore, Vol. I, L. No. 210. p. 157.
[2] Analysis of the Finances of Bengal by James Grant, included in the Fifth Report...1812. p. 336.

April 1770 to the 10th April 1771, the net revenue was increased by *sicca* Rs. 30,000 making the total equivalent to *sicca* Rs. 2,80,501 in spite of the great famine of 1769-70 A.D.

The famine of 1770

Hunter in his Annals of Rural Bengal thus describes the great famine of 1769-70:

"In the cold weather of 1769 Bengal was visited by a famine whose ravages two generations failed to repair. English historians, treating of Indian history as a series of struggles about the Company's charter enlivened with startling military exploits, have naturally little to say regarding an occurrence which involved neither a battle nor a parliamentary debate. Mill, with all his accuracy and minuteness, can spare barely five lines for the subject, and the recent Famine Commissioners confess themselves unable to fill in the details. But the disaster which from this distance floats as a faint speck on the horizon of our rule, stands out in the contemporary records in appalling proportions. It forms, indeed, the key to the history of Bengal during the succeeding forty years. It places in a new light those broad tracks of desolation which the English conquerors found everywhere throughout the Lower Valley; it unfolds the sufferings entailed on an ancient rural society, by being suddenly placed in a position in which its immemorial forms and usages could no longer apply; and then it explains how, out of the disorganized and fragmentary elements, a new order of things was evolved.

"Lower Bengal has three harvests each year: a scanty pulse crop in spring; a more important rice crop in autumn; and the great rice crop, the harvest of the year, in December. In the early part of 1769 high prices had ruled, owing to the partial failure of the crops in 1768, but the scarcity had not been so severe as materially to affect the Government rental. In spite of the complaints and forebodings of local officers, the authorities at headquarters reported that the land-tax had been rigorously enforced; and the rains of 1769, although deficient in the northern districts, seemed for a time to promise relief. In the Delta they had been so abundant as to cause temporary loss from inundation; and during the succeeding year of general famine, the whole south-east of Bengal uttered no complaint. ... But the periodical rains prematurely ceased, and the crop which depended on them for existence withered. 'The fields of rice,' wrote the native superintendent of Bishenpore at a later period, 'are become like fields of dried straw.' ...

"On the 24th of December, after the last harvest of the year had been gathered in, Mr. Gerelst laid down his office, without having conveyed to his masters a single intimation of the true nature of the impending famine.

"On the same day Mr. Cartier took over charge of the province, but he seems to have intimated to his masters no further anxiety until late in January 1770. In the fourth week of that month he

writes that one district was suffering so severely that some slight remission of the land-tax would have to be made; but ten days afterwards he informs the Court, that although the distress was undoubtedly very great, the Council had not 'yet found any failure in the revenue or stated payments.'

"New hopes had also arisen, for the spring crop now covered the fields and promised a speedy although a scanty relief. It was ascertained, moreover, that both banks of the Ganges, in the north of the province, had yielded an abundant barley and wheat harvest. The people suffered intensely,—how intensely, it seems to have been as difficult then as now for the Central Government to ascertain until too late; and notwithstanding alarming reports from the districts, up to the middle of February the Council believed the question to be chiefly one of revenue. The utmost that could be expected from Government, it wrote, would be a lenient policy towards the husbandmen whom a bad harvest had disabled from paying the usual land-tax. It was common at that period to make temporary remissions and advances whenever a harvest proved deficient; but during 1769-70, although such indulgences were constantly proposed, they were not, except in a very few isolated instances, granted. Various charitable schemes were proposed, but no other relief measures at this period are specified in the letters home, and the local efforts, as will be afterwards seen, were on a sadly inadequate scale. In April a scanty spring harvest was gathered in; and the Council, acting upon the advice of its Mussulman Minister of Finance, added ten per cent. to the land-tax for the ensuing year.

"But the distress continued to increase at a rate that baffled official calculation. The marvellous and infinitely pathetic silence under suffering which characterizes the Bengalee at length was broken; and in the second week of May, the Central Government awoke to find itself in the midst of universal and irremediable starvation. 'The mortality, the beggary,' they then wrote, 'exceed all description. Above one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the once plentiful province of Purneah, and in other parts the misery is equal.' "[1]

The appointment of Supervisors

The widespread havoc caused by this famine prompted an urgent gearing up of the administration. The *āmil* appears to have been withdrawn towards the end of 1770 and a Supervisor was placed in charge of the three districts of Birbhum, Vishnupur and Panchet. Alexander Higginson, apparently the first Supervisor, seems to have let out the lands in farm for the year 1771-72.[2]

[1] W. W. Hunter—Annals of Rural Bengal, Vol. I. (The Ethnical frontier of Lower Bengal with the Ancient Principalities of Beerbhoom and Bishenpore). London, 1868. pp. 19-24.

[2] W. K. Firminger—Introduction to the Fifth Report, etc. p. clxxxii.

The creation of the posts of Supravisors (or Supervisors) stemmed from the desire of the Governor and the Council to obtain more accurate information that were available at the time in respect of some of the important districts forming the Diwani portion, especially relating to revenue matters.[1] Among other things, the Supravisor was required to make himself acquainted with the existing *hustabood* and then to proceed to gather information necessary for the formation of a new and accurate one. To eliminate conflicts between the newly appointed Supravisors and the *āmils*, the latter were recalled from the districts by an order issued in October 1770.[2]

It appears from the *hustabood* account for the Bengali year 1183 (1776-1777 A.D.) that the total *jummā* of Vishnupur for the Bengali year 1178 (1771-1772 A.D.) amounted to *sicca* Rs. 4,79,666-15 annas-16 gandas. This was increased by *sicca* Rs. 43,150-3 annas-4 gandas in the Bengali year 1183 on account of the rise which had taken place in the mufassil revenues during the intervening five years. The *jummā* of the Bengali year 1178 with the increase of the subsequent five years thus came to *sicca* Rs. 5,22,871-3 annas, and the *hustabood jummā* for the Bengali year 1183 aggregated *sicca* Rs. 5,18,731-13 annas-15 gandas.

The Supervisors or Supravisors were initially under the immediate control of the Resident at Murshidabad but in July 1770 a different administrative arrangement was adopted in accordance with a directive from the Court of Directors dated June 30, 1769 laying down that two Comptrolling Councils would function, one with headquarters at Murshidabad and the other at Patna.[3] The two Councils supervised the work of the Supravisors—the former controlling the Supravisors in Bengal and the latter those in Bihar. In April 1772, Warren Hastings succeeded Cartier as Governor and President of the Council at Fort William, and on the 11th of May of that year a proclamation was issued in Calcutta divesting Muhammad Reza Khan of his post of Naib Diwan and replacing him by a Committee of Revenue consisting of the whole Council.[4] This proclamation gave effect to the decision of the Directors of the East India Company "to stand forth as Duan, and, by the agency of the Company's servants, to take upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenues." In June 1772, a committee called the Committee of Circuit was constituted with Warren Hastings as the President. Its purpose was to visit the principal districts and to assess the respective revenues for five years.[5] The Committee effected the settlement of Birbhum, Vishnupur and Panchet upon an increasing

[1] Monmohan Chakravarti—Summary of the Changes in the Jurisdiction of Districts in Bengal, 1757-1916. p. 8.
[2] Firminger—op. cit. p. cxcv.
[3] ibid. p. clxxi.
[4] Monmohan Chakravarti—op. cit.
[5] Firminger—op. cit. p. cxiv.

revenue for five years on farming leases.[1] It is, however, not clear whether the Vishnupur estates were leased out to some outsiders or given to the Raja himself on lease.

Administrative changes of 1772

The Comptrolling Council at Murshidabad was abolished in September 1772, after which the Governor and the entire Council converted themselves into a Revenue Board for dealing directly with the local officers. The Supravisors were now called Collectors but they were withdrawn in 1773 and *āmils* were posted in their places. The administrative changes carried out in 1773 were not confined only to the recall of the European Collectors from the districts and their substitution by Indian *āmils* but also introduced major changes at higher levels. Five Provincial Councils covering Bengal were set up with headquarters at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Burdwan, Dinajpur and Dacca.[2] Each Provincial Council was to consist of a Chief, 4 Senior Servants, a Persian translator, an accountant, an assistant and a *Dīwan* to be appointed by the Government. The Provincial Council could correspond with the Governor and Council and the *Dīwan* with the Rāy-Rāyān. The districts of Vishnupur, Birbhum and Panchet were included within the jurisdiction of the Provincial Council at Burdwan.[3] The Provincial Councils were abolished in 1781 and British Collectors were again posted to the districts.[4]

Rack-renting by the Company and its consequences

It appears that some time prior to 1785, Vishnupur and Birbhum had been included within the district of Murshidabad.[5] The famine of 1769-70 had depopulated the two districts of Birbhum and Vishnupur to such an extent that even in 1787, when the two districts were united and placed under one administrator, its effects were still apparent. During the first fifteen years after the famine, depopulation steadily increased. Large areas went out of cultivation and were covered up by jungle.[6] The Company, however, not only did not reduce the revenue demand but even increased it.[7] The revenue farmers, failing to fulfil their commitments, were thrown into prison.[8] As a result, a competition grew up amongst landlords to procure husbandmen or ryots because the existing body of husbandmen was not enough to bring all the available land under cultivation. "By degrees the agricultural population divided itself into two classes: the so-called resident cultivators (*Khudkasht*) who, from attachment to their ancient homes, or, as was much more frequently the case, by reason of indebtedness to their landlord, continued on the same

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[1] ibid. p. ccxix.
[2] ibid. pp. ccxxxiii-ccxxxvi and Monmohan Chakravarti. op. cit.
[3] Firminger—op. cit. p. ccxxxv.
[4] ibid. p. cccxxx.
[5] *vide* Chapter I, *supra*.
[6] W. W. Hunter—Annals of Rural Bengal, Vol. I. pp. 60-61.
[7] ibid. pp. 59-60.
[8] N. K. Sinha in his Economic History of Bengal (Vol. II) · From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement (Calcutta, 1962: Appendix B) gives a list of prisoners held for revenue arrears in 1789-90 in the Collectorship of Birbhum-Vishnupur.

estate as before the famine; and a more adventurous class, termed non-resident or vagrant cultivators (*Paikasht*), who threw up their previous holdings and went in search of new ones at the lower rates to which depopulation had reduced the market value of land."[1] Quite naturally, the *Paikasht* ryots came to enjoy more advantageous terms, at least temporarily, than they had done ever before.[2]

Activities of freebooters

"As a consequence of the Famine there was an alarming increase in the depredations of decoits."[3] Bodies of freebooters used to enter the two districts of Birbhum and Vishnupur from the adjoining hilly countries and loot the villages. In fact, the creation of the new districts of Birbhum and Vishnupur was due to the prevalence of a general state of lawlessness on account of the activities of these freebooters at that time. Mr. Christopher Keating came to Suri as the Collector of the united district of Birbhum and Vishnupur in December 1788. He was mostly engaged in trying to beat off the frequent attacks of the freebooters, as the following extract from the Annals of Rural Bengal would show:

"The disorders in Bishenpore would, in any less troubled time, have been called rebellion. The Rajah had been imprisoned for arrears of the land-tax; the head assistant to the Collector, Mr. Hesilrige, was in charge of his estates, and the inhabitants made common cause with the banditti to oppose the Government. In June 1789, a detachment was hurried out to support the civil power; eight days afterwards a reinforcement followed, too late however to save the chief manufacturing town (the place would seem to be Illambazar on the Ajay—Ed.) in the district from being sacked in open daylight. Next month, Mr. Keating reported to Government that the marauders having crossed the Adji in 'a large party armed with tulwars (swords) and matchlocks,' had established themselves in Beerbhoom, and that their reduction would simply be a question of military force.

"The rainy season, however, came to the aid of the authorities. The plunderers, laden with spoil, and leaving a sufficient force to hold

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[1] W. W. Hunter—Annals of Rural Bengal, Vol. I. pp. 59-60.

[2] N. K. Sinha, in his Economic History of Bengal, Vol. II (p. 135), gives an indication of the problems faced by the Company's administrators in trying to reclaim large parts of uncultivated land which existed in almost all the districts. "Some Indulgence was therefore necessary in order to make up for rent of that part which lay uncropped. The rates of assessment in many districts were perhaps so heavy that the capacity of the ryots to discharge them arose from their secretly holding lands which paid no rent. The intricacy and confusion of the accounts of the ryots created an impression that the problem of simplification of accounts was insoluble. The hereditary resident ryots generally paid the highest rents. The non-resident ryots who cultivated lands of distant villages were tenants-at-will and in some parts they paid the lowest rents. Even some resident ryots who cultivated the lands of their own village did not pay rent for their dwelling house, nor did they pay so high a rent for their lands as the resident ryots described as *khodkast*. These privileged tenants were described as *Netz-ghari pykast*. Other non-residents were described as *baze gaon pykast*. A ryot paid his rent either by a formal agreement called *patta* or by an implied agreement in accordance with the prevailing rate which was known as *nirik*."

[3] ibid. p. 62.

Bishenpore as a base for their operations in the next cold weather, retreated to their strongholds; and Mr. Keating took advantage of the lull to devise a more elaborate system for warding the frontier. He represented to Lord Cornwallis, then Governor-General, that the existing military force was insufficient to hold the district; that the contingents furnished by the hereditary wardens of the marches were undisciplined, faint-hearted, more disposed to act with the plunderers than against them; and that to secure peace to the lowlands, it was absolutely necessary to station a guard of picked soldiers from the regular army at each of the passes. A nucleus would thus be formed round which the irregular troops might gather. By return of post, with a promptitude that lets us into the secret of Lord Cornwallis' success as an Indian administrator, came back an answer 'that the Commander-in-Chief has been requested to detach' a sufficient force which the Collector 'will station at the different ghauts (passes), through which the Dacoits generally make their inroads into the low country.' In November, the six most important passes were occupied, a detachment was stationed in Bishenpore, another occupied the chief manufacturing town on the Adji (the one that had been sacked the previous summer), to prevent the banditti from crossing the river. The Adji divides the united district into two parts, Bishenpore on the south, Beerbhoom on the north; and these measures, while they restored comparative quiet to the former, left the latter defenceless. 'Scarce a night passes,' wrote Mr. Keating, 'without some daring robbery.' The military harassed by night marches, and scattered about in small bands, were unable to cope with the banditti, or even to protect the principal towns. . . . At length, on the 5th of June, Raj-Nagar, the ancient capital and the seat of the hereditary princes, fell into the hands of the banditti. . . .

"Mr. Keating's position was a difficult one. He had to guard Bishenpore on the south of the Adji, Beerbhoom on the north, and above all, the passes along the western frontier. Beerbhoom, as the headquarters of the English power, was of the first importance; but if he called in the troops from Bishenpore, the calamities of the preceding year would be repeated; and if he withdrew the outposts from the western passes, the entire district, north and south, would be at the mercy of the hill-men. He decided that it was better to let the marauders riot for a time on the south of the Adji, than to open up his entire frontier. An express (*sic.*) summoned the detachment from Bishenpore by forced marches to the rescue of Beerbhoom; but no sooner had they crossed the river than tidings came that Bishenpore was itself in the hands of 'insurgents assembled in number nearly one thousand.' The rebellion spread into adjoining jurisdictions, and the Collectors on the south bitterly reproached Mr. Keating with having sacrificed the peace of many districts for the sake of maintaining intact the outposts along the frontier of his own. The

more strictly these passes were guarded, the greater the number of marauders who flocked by a circuitous route into the unprotected country on the south of the Adji. Their outrages passed all bounds; the approaching rains, by suspending military operations, threatened to leave them in possession of Bishenpore for several months; till at last the peasantry, wishing for death rather than life, rose against the oppressors whom they had a year ago welcomed as allies, and the evil began to work its own cure. The marauders of Bishenpore underwent the fate of the Abyssinian slave-troops in Bengal three hundred years before, being shut out of the walled cities, decoyed into the woods by twos and threes, set upon by bands of infuriated peasants, and ingnobly beaten to death by clubs. In midsummer 1790, Mr. Keating ordered the senior captain 'to station a military guard with an officer at Bishenpore, whose sole business I propose to be that of receiving all thieves and Dacoits that shall be sent in.' "[1]

Commercial factories of the Company in Bankura and neighbouring areas

At this time the East India Company's principal activity lay in trade and commerce. Prior to the acquisition of the *Diwani*, the Company had to bring gold and silver from England for purchasing goods produced in this country but afterwards the Company's purchases began to be financed out of the Indian revenues. Only a small fraction of the revenue of a district was spent on administration, the bulk being used for financing the commercial undertakings of the Company within the district. When Keating was the Collector of the united district of Vishnupur and Birbhum, Cheap was its Commercial Resident supervising the commercial transactions of the Company there.[2] He had three head factories and twelve subordinate factories under him.[3] The important products were silk, cotton cloths, fibres, gums and lac dye.[4] The Company's business was managed under two distinct systems: (i) by covenanted servants who received regular pay and invested money entrusted to them without making any private profit, and (ii) by unsalaried agents who contracted to supply goods at a certain rate with an option to make whatever private profits they could in the process. The first group, i.e. the covenanted servants, bore designations of Residents, Senior Merchants, Junior Merchants, Factors and Sub-Factors. The Commercial Resident, Mr. Cheap, enjoyed the enviable privilege of carrying on an enormous business on his own account. While the Collector, Mr. Keating, resided in a mud tenement, Mr. Cheap lived sumptuously in palatial buildings surrounded by artificial lakes and spacious gardens and was known as 'Cheap the Magnificent'. He even exercised magisterial powers and settled rural disputes. Being entrusted with the duty of making huge purchases for the Company,

[1] W. W. Hunter—Annals of Rural Bengal, Vol. 1. pp. 78-82.

[2] For a fuller account of the activities of John Cheap, see entry Sonamukhi in the chapter on Places of Interest.

[3] W. W. Hunter—Annals of Rural Bengal, Vol. I. p. 350.

[4] loc. cit.

he had the entire artisan classes under his complete control. It appears that in 1813 there was a head factory at Sonamukhi with 31 *aurungs* (subordinate establishments) among which were Surul and Illambazar in Birbhum district and Patrasayer in Bankura district.[1] There were also small sugar factories at Sonamukhi, Vishnupur and Patrasayer besides a large one at Surul.[2] John Cheap was appointed as Resident of the head factory at Sonamukhi in December 1797.[3]

The decline of the Vishnupur Raj and its ultimate dismemberment

Vishnupur came under the Collector of Burdwan in June 1793. It appears that Keating was at that time the Collector of Birbhum. The condition of the Raja of Vishnupur in 1794 is very well portrayed in a letter dated the 12th February 1794 from the Collector of Burdwan addressed to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue at Fort William, Calcutta. Because of its importance, the letter is reproduced below in its entirety.

"In the Towjee last transmitted I proposed explaining the balance standing against Bishenpore by a separate letter which I have now the honour of addressing to you on that subject.

"To convey a clear idea of the case it may be necessary first to describe the relative situations of the two proprietors which I shall endeavour to do as briefly as possible.

"Bishenpore appears to be one of the most ancient estates in the Country for by an era peculiar to the District it must have been hold (held ?—Ed.) in possession by the present proprietors' family through a course of 1099 years.

"Some years ago the head of a junior branch of this family drove out the senior and possessed himself of the zemindary but a military force sent by Government after subduing him, restored the fugitive Choytun Singh to possession as sole zemindar. The person so subdued was afterwards by a decision of the Company's resident at Moorshedabad declared entitled to one half of the District but Choytun Singh the other party appealing to the Governor-General in Council had a decree given in his favour confirming him in the possession as zemindar and declaring the respondent Damodar Singh entitled only to a maintenance. The Decree is said to be dated 1787.

"In 1791 a new decision was notified to the Collector of Beerbhoom whereby the zemindary was again divided between the contending parties but Choytun Singh not acquiescing, instituted a suit in the

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[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 39.

[2] The credit advanced to Commercial Residents in 1789-1800 on account of Investment and Factory Establishment charges for the group of factories at Sonamukhi and Surul were as follows:

Centre	Investment	Factory Charges	Total
Sonamukhi	Rs. 7,53,345-10-10-0	Rs. 32,048-0-14-2	Rs. 7,85,393-11-4-2
Surul	Rs. 25,660- 1-17-0	Rs. 2,225-0- 0-0	Rs. 27,885-1-17-0

(A. Mitra and R. Guha, ed.—West Bengal District Records, New Series: Burdwan, *Vol. II, Introduction by Ranjit Guha. p. lxxxi*).

[3] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. p. 40.

Dewanny Adawlut of Beerbhoom which the Judge dismissed, the Plaintiff however persisting in his claim appealed to the Sudder Dewanny Adawlut where the cause at this present time lies undetermined or determined without notification thereof having yet been received.

"Previous both to the decennial settlement and to the last order for dividing the zemindary, an investigation was made by special commission into the assets of the country whereby agreeably to the principles of the public Regulations many advantages enjoyed, it is said from time immemorial either as appendages to the state of the ancient Rajah's or connived at by the native Government were abolished or resumed as inconsistent with the definition established of proprietory right and the gross assets of the country being rated at about *sicca* Rs. 4,60,269 the proprietors adjudged entitled to one-eleventh part only of the net estimate collections. But under the Khas collections of that year, the country yielded much less than the estimate, viz. only *sicca* Rs. 4,09,000. At this conjuncture Choytun Singh being called upon to make his decennial settlement engaged (too hastily as he wished to have it understood) for Annual Jumma of Rs. 4,00,000 being fearful that his adversary Damodar Singh might supersede him with an offer of that amount but falling in arrears at the end of the year more than half the zemindary was sold to realize the balance and thereby his adversary who in the interim was declared entitled to half the estates as before mentioned, equally involved.

"But though neither of them can pretend to dispute the validity of the engagement for the Jumma of Rs. 4,00,000 whether impudently made or not they both assert that circumstances have occurred extremely injurious to them and which if not remedied, must end in their utter ruin.

"They say that certain assets enjoyed by Government under the Khas collection and making a part of the estimate before mentioned on the grounds of which estimate their decennial engagement was founded, have been since abolished without their having received any deduction or consideration for the same when their lands were sold and without any deduction or consideration being made for the same in the balance now in demand against them on account of the year last expired, for which balance almost all the part remaining of their estate is now under attachment and orders for sale.

"They moreover allege that the Jumma assigned to them after the sale of their land at the Khalsa to liquidate the balance of 1198 was overrated in the sum of *sicca* Rs. 20,467 and that by consequence this excess enters into every subsequent balance outstanding against them, a circumstance which they explain by declaring the sale in question to have been made contrary to justice and to the rule laid down by Government for such cases, for instead of the whole zemindary in the rates prescribed the net produce only of the lands

sold was considered out of which a deduction of Malikanah was allowed to the purchaser amounting to *sicca* Rs. 20,467 which as the produce of the whole estate fell short that year of its assessment became unequal burthen on the part remaining and has had the effect of increasing by that amount every subsequent balance.

"In addition to the foregoing, they represent as hardship that there are suits to the amount of *sicca* Rs. 14,000 instituted to recover demand of rent on account of last year still undecided in the Adawlut, owing to the delay incident to those courts. These several articles are as follows:—

Abkary Mahal	750
Soodran Mahal	1,365
Dehdary	331
Malikanah allowed the purchaser of Barohazary & ca ?	20,467
	22,913
Suits pending in the Adawlut	14,000
	36,913

"In regard to the balance stated in the present Towjee the zemindars represent it to be owing partly to circumstance above recited and partly to the contumacy of a species of Mokurrerydars termed Gautwauls and others who hold lands under fixed Jummas amounting together to about *sicca* Rs. 12,000 hitherto regularly paid whether under a Khas collection of zemindary settlement but being in consequence of the police arrangements now put under the direction of the poilce Darogahs these landholders deny any obligation of service due to the zemindars and refuse to pay rent and the local circumstances of the case being such as to render recovery of the demands by the rules laid down for distraint impossible, more especially as they are encouraged in their contumacy by the Darogahs, the proprietors have no other resource left than in application to the Dewany Adawlut where prompt decision is impossible.

"On the two last Articles in particular, they make remarks which if false, may be easily refuted but if true cannot be too generally known and which therefore I am not scrupulous of reciting namely that at the time of making their decennial settlement they had every reason to believe, because no hint was given to the contrary that the same summary method of settling Malguzary disputes and of enforcing payment from under renters and Ryotts which had always prevailed, would still be continued instead of which Regulations have since been introduced either impracticable in themselves or subject to official form and procrastination ruinous to those bound

by them though highly advantageous and encouraging to persons who destitute of good faith are inclined to withhold from them their just dues that these rules are the more remarkable from being introduced with preambles whereby the objects of them appear to be directly the reverse of their effects when reduced to practice and which may therefore induce an erroneous belief that they are beneficial instead of injurious. That for their own part they can with truth declare the whole history of their zemindary does not furnish an instance before of any proprietor being legally reduced to situations similar to what they find themselves in at present though many may have suffered as severely from lawless despotism. That the condition of their ancestors compared with their own is evident from the vestiges of public works both of ornament and use, in magnificent temples dedicated to the deity, and in the record of ample establishments for the performance of religious circumstances, whereas the scene is now so much changed as to exhibit those vestiges hastening faster than ever to a total disappearance; the temples deserted and in ruins, the zemindary diminished by one half, with the principal part of the remainder under attachment for sale and themselves after being driven to the necessity of pawning their household goods still subject to a demand of arrears arising from the circumstances recited, an enforcement of which demands must reduce them to beggary and terminate their existence as Rajahs and landholders together with their zemindary or estate which had until lately been maintained in affluence through a period of nearly eleven hundred years.

"I have now, Gentlemen, given you all the information in my power in regard to the cause of the balance in Bishenpore and perhaps more than is necessary in regard to the general circumstances of the zemindary. As I understand the zemindars have already laid most of the particulars complained of before Government through their Vackeel in Calcutta but I cannot conclude this letter without earnestly recommending an application being made for as early a decision as possible not only on the points which relate to the balances but on the appeal which has been made to the Sudder Dewanny Adawlut for until the proprietory right be finally decided beyond the possibility of further investigation or appear the same contention between the parties which has long subsisted, must ever continue to the prejudice both of the country and the Revenue of Government."[1]

On the order of the Board of Revenue, the Collector carefully examined the records relating to the zemindari of Vishnupur and submitted a report on the 26th June 1794[2] in which he expressed the

[1] From S. Davis, Collector of Burdwan, to W. Cowper, President & Member of the Board of Revenue, Fort William, 12th Feb., 1794: West Bengal District Records, New Series, Burdwan: Letters Issued, 1788-1800. Calcutta, 1956. pp. 101-03.

[2] From S. Davis to W. Cowper; June 26, 1794. Ibid. pp. 127-31.

opinion that at the time of the decennial settlement the assessment on the Vishnupur estates was overrated and that the zemindars were entitled to compensation for the error committed by the sale of their lands for alleged arrears. He quoted a letter of Keating of the 25th August 1791, in which there was a statement to the effect that Chaitanya Singh was forced to agree to the terms of the decennial settlement. *It appears that Chaitanya Singh, until he acquiesced* with the orders of the Board of Revenue transmitted to him by Keating, was held as a prisoner. But the findings of Samuel Davis, the Collector of Burdwan, did not apparently convince the Board of Revenue which went on ordering for sale of the Raja's lands for realization of arrears of revenue.[1] Finally, in 1799, Chaitanya Singh's estates were attached.[2] Finding no remedy at the hands of the Government, Chaitanya Singh's son and grandsons appear to have taken recourse to violence for saving their estates. The *Sezawāl*, who was deputed to attach the estates of Chaitanya Singh, reported that the son and grandsons of the Raja had recruited a large number of bowmen and *barkandāzes* from among the Chuars with whose help they prevented the *Sezawāl* from collecting the revenue of the attached *mahāls*. As a further means of preserving his interests, Chaitanya Singh began to issue *brahmottar* and *devottar* grants in respect of the disputed lands, thereby making them rent-free. This prompted Burges, the then Collector of Burdwan, to recommend the immediate attachment of *lākherāj* grants which might have been alienated from *kherāj* or public revenues since the commencement of the decennial settlement, knowing full well that the relevant regulations then in force required the Collector to approach the *Adālat* or the court, in the first instance, for the rectification of all improper alienations, if any. All these struggles, however, of the Raja of Vishnupur to save his estates failed and eventually in 1806 his ancestral lands were sold out for arrears of land revenue by the Government and bought up by the Maharaja of Burdwan. The zemindary thus lost, the family became dependent upon small pensions granted by the Government and upon what little *devottar* property they could salvage. The descendants of the royal house now living at Vishnupur, Jamkundi, Indas and Kuchiakol are in extremely reduced circumstances but they still retain a strong hold on the affections of the local people who have not forgotten that their ancestors were once mighty sovereigns ruling Mallabhum with benevolence and renown.

[1] (*a*) From J. Deane to R. Ireland, Collector of Burdwan. June 9, 1797.
(*b*) From C. Buller to R. Ireland. February 16, 1798 (West Bengal District Records: Burdwan. New Series). Letters Received. p. 609 & p. 783.

[2] (*a*) From Y. Burges, Collector of Burdwan, to G. Thompson, Magistrate of Burdwan. Sept. 21, 1799.
(*b*) From Y. Burges to W. Cowper. Sept. 24, 1799 with an enclosure containing the report of the *Sezawāl* Ramkanta Das. *Supra*, Letters Issued. pp. 396-98.

Durjan Singh, zemindar of Raipur, clashes with the Company and joins the Chuārs

During the concluding decade of the 17th century, the Raj estate at Raipur was established by Fateh Singh. He was intimately related to the Malla Raj family of Vishnupur. His linear descendant, Durjan Singh, held the Raipur zemindari on a *mokarari* lease. He failed to clear his dues in the Bengali year 1197 (1790-91 A.D.) as a result of which a *Sezawāl* was appointed to realize the amount. Durjan Singh did not feel very happy at the arrangement and prevailed upon his tenants to pay him the rent instead of paying it to the *Sezawāl*. Raipur, it may be recalled, was at that time included within the district of Burdwan. On the 19th of July 1793, Durjan Singh, described as the *Tālukdār* of Raipur, was consigned to prison for non-realization of revenue amounting to about Rs. 3,145 only outstanding against him, on the requisition of the Collector addresssd to the Judge of the *Diwāni Adālat* of Burdwan.[1] Simultaneously, a notice was arranged to be printed in the Calcutta Gazette that the taluk of Raipur containing 57 villages and having an annual assessment of land tax in perpetuity amounting to *sicca* Rs. 2,509-3 as. would be sold by public auction in the forenoon of the 20th August 1793 at the zilla cutcherry of Burdwan in liquidation of the arrear of land tax due to the Government from Durjan Singh.[2] Finding himself in this predicament, Durjan Singh submitted a petition to the Collector in which he pleaded that the balance outstanding against him had resulted solely from his financial inability and had not been withheld wilfully. As the taluk was situated in the jungles, he pointed out, it would not sell for its value, the only effect of the sale of the estate being to deprive him of an inheritance which had descended to him through fifty-two generations. He, accordingly, prayed for permission to appoint as manager his son who, he assured the Collector, would engage to pay the outstanding balance together with the revenue that would become due in the course of the ensuing year. He, therefore, appealed that the sale be stopped and the *Sezawāl* withdrawn.[3] The Board apparently turned down Durjan Singh's petition (a copy of which had been forwarded to it by the Collector) as Raipur was sold to one Shew Prasad for *sicca* Rs. 7,025. Durjan Singh then submitted an application to the Judge of the *Diwāni Adālat* at Burdwan praying that the sale be set aside and he be allowed to pay the balance of the revenue. His petition was, however, not successful and he moved against the order of the Zilla Court to the Court of Appeal which reversed the decision of the Zilla Court of Burdwan and set aside the sale but it does not appear that Durjan Singh finally succeeded in regaining possession of his

[1] From S. Davis to W. A. Brooke. July 19, 1793. West Bengal District Records (New Series). Letters Issued. p. 63.

[2] From S. Davis to the printer of the Calcutta Gazette. July 20, 1793. ibid. pp. 63-64.

[3] From S. Davis to W. Cowper with an enclosure. 3rd August 1793. ibid. p. 68.

estate as the Collector of Burdwan, on the order of the Board of Revenue, appealed against the decision of the Court of Appeal to the Sadar *Diwānī Adālat* in Calcutta. This was in September 1795. The Collector succeeded in his appeal and Durjan Singh could not regain possession of his estate.[1] But Durjan Singh was not the man to remain a helpless spectator of the devious legal processes which deprived him of his ancestral properties. In 1779 he rebelled against the Government, and in concert with the Raja of Dhalbhum, offered armed resistance against the troops sent to reduce him to obedience.[2] It seems that in November 1779, he went to Burdwan but he was evidently not detained there for long as we find him very much active in 1783 as one of the leaders of the insurgents. It appears that a disaffection also arose among the Chuars in the Bagri pargana similar to that which prevailed at the time in the thana Balarampur and other western parts of Midnapur. The principal rebel was Chitra (Chitter) Singh, the zemindar of Bagri. Sundar Narayan, the *Tālukdār* of Phulkusma, and Durjan Singh, the *Tālukdār* of Raipur, led their adherents, referred to as Chuars or Choars in contemporary correspondence, in committing depredations in the neighbourhood. It appears that the Rani of Karangarh also aided the Chuars in their spoliation. It took the East India Company nearly a year to put down this rebellion.

The Chuars of Bankura and Midnapur concerned in this outbreak were mostly lower caste Hindus of those districts. In the years 1799 and 1800 there were uprisings by the zemindari pykes in the districts of Midnapur and Bankura as a protest against the resumption of lands that had so long been enjoyed by them on a service tenure for the performance of police duties.[3] These uprisings were of such a

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[1] (a) From S. Davis to W. Cowper. 28th March 1795. ibid. pp. 190-91.
(b) From S. Davis to J. Imhoff. 10th August 1795. ibid. p. 212.
(c) From S. Davis to W. Cowper. 15th August 1795. ibid. pp. 212-14.
(d) From S. Davis to J. Barton. 15th & 16th August 1795. ibid. p. 215.
(e) From S. Davis to G. H. Barlow. 1st September 1795. ibid. p. 217.
(f) From S. Davis to J. Spottiswood. 15th September 1795. ibid. p. 218.

[2] S. B. Chaudhuri—Civil Disturbances in India (1765-1857). Calcutta, 1955. pp. 54-56.

[3] S. B. Chaudhuri in his Civil Disturbances in India (1765-1857); Calcutta, 1955 (p. 67) explains the background of the Chuar uprising in this region, thus:

"The stronghold of the Chuars was in Manbhum and Barabhum particularly in the hills between Barabhum and Ghatsila. They held their lands under a kind of feudal tenure, but were not attached to the soil, being always ready to change the plough for the club at the bidding of their turbulent jungle chiefs or zamindars who could not be coerced into paying revenue. Official letters show that in 1776 a *mocurrery* or fixed settlement was made with all the jungle zamindars under Midnapur *chakla* by order of the Board, as an acknowledgement merely of the Company's authority. In a letter from the Collector of Midnapur to Hastings (23 November, 1781), the rents of the jungle zamindars are described as a kind of quit-rent collected from their Paiks and Chuars, who are inhabitants of these zamindaris. The Chuars, it was said, were bred up 'as much for pillaging as for cultivating, and pay a rent from the profits of both the occupations.' Even formerly under Muhammadan rule, this part of the country was infested with Chuars. After the British occupation of the country, several punitive expeditions were sent against them as in 1767. 1769 and 1770, but all these did not lead to any substantial result. So a scheme of building small

grave character that detachments of the army had to be deployed in putting them down. The disaffected zemindars of the locality naturally took advantage of this unrest among the pykes or Chuars for furthering their own ends, and Durjan Singh was no exception.[1]

Bankura as a part of the Jungle Mahāls

"At this time Bankura appears to have been known as part of the Jungle Mahāls, a vague term applied in the 18th century to the British possessions and some dependent chiefdoms lying between Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chota Nagpur. As the system of administration was not precise, inconvenience was caused by the vagueness of the jurisdiction in these tracts; and in 1805 a regulation (Regulation XVIII of 1805) was passed, by which the districts called the Jungle Mahāls, situated in the *zilās* of Birbhum, Burdwan and Midnapore, were separated from the jurisdiction of the Magistrates of those *zilās*, and placed under the jurisdiction of an officer called the Magistrate of the Jungle Mahāls. The district thus formed was composed of 23 *parganas* and *mahāls*, of which fifteen, including Panchet, were transferred from Birbhum; three were transferred from Burdwan, viz., Senpahari, Shergarh and Bishnupur, excepting the police circle of Kotalpur and the contiguous *pargana* of Balsi, which remained under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate of Burdwan; and five were transferred from Midnapore, viz., Chhatna, Barabhum, Manbhum, Supur, Ambikanagar, Simlapal and Bhalaidiha. It was further provided that the half-yearly jail deliveries for the Jungle Mahāls should be holden by one of the Judges of the Court of Circuit for the Division of Calcutta, and that the Jungle Mahāls should continue subject in all matters of civil cognizance to the courts of *Dīwāni Adālat* for the respective *zilās* to which they had hitherto been attached.

"Some interesting details of the district as thus constituted are given in a register of 'The established offices, places and employments appertaining to the Civil Departments under the Bengal Government on the part of the Hon'ble the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies' for 1813. The Judge and Magistrate of the Jungle Mahāls *zilā* was Alexander Bruere Todd, drawing pay of Rs. 2,333, who was assisted by a Registrar, Thomas Pakenham, on Rs. 500 and an Assistant Surgeon on Rs. 300. The headquarters were at Bankura, and there were seven thanas transferred from Burdwan and two from Midnapore, viz., Chhatna and Bara Sarenga. The annual cost of judicial establishment was Rs. 7,347, including police and contingencies; and we find entries of Rs. 11,160 payable

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thanas in the interior with 60 sepoys each was put into execution as a means of temporary defence. Later on, in the year 1795, the landholders of the jungle mahals were vested with a joint charge of the police of their respective estates in concert with the darogas appointed under Regulation XXII of 1793. They were required to guard against the Chuars in consideration of which their *paikan* lands which had been resumed were restored."

[1] ibid. pp. 67-72.

to the zamindar of Bishnupur and his family, and of Rs. 476 paid as allowances to 19 zamindars employed to act as police officers in Panchet (described as lately under the Birbhum Magistrate). The revenue administration of the district was supervised by the Burdwan Collector, but was under the direct control of Mr. Pakenham, who is described as *ex-officio* Assistant stationed at Bankura, drawing pay of Rs. 200 a month."[1]

The policing system obtaining in this region was somewhat peculiar. There were small military establishments at Jhalda and Raghunathpur (now in Purulia district) on the Calcutta-Banaras Road for coming to the help of the civil administration in case of need. The zemindars were required to maintain such numbers of pykes or other watchmen as might be prescribed by the Magistrate with the approval of the Government. A list of such persons was to be delivered to the Magistrate and all changes therein were to be reported to him. The pykes or watchmen were subject to the authority of the Magistrate and punishable by him for neglect of duty. The zemindars were required to aid and assist the *dārogās* where *dārogās* had been appointed, and to send persons apprehended for heinous crimes to the nearest *dārogā* or to the Magistrate within 24 hours. Thus by the new regulations the persons who in the past had caused breaches of the peace were made responsible for the maintenance of law and order. As a further precaution it was prescribed in the regulations governing the administration of the new Jungle Mahāls that no zemindar shall summon the ryots of another, nor were the police officers of one zemindar to be sent into the territory of another without an application or the orders of the Magistrate.

Ganga Narayan *Hāngāmā*

In 1832 the peace of the newly formed district of Jungle Mahāls was broken by the disturbances known as 'Ganga Narayan *Hāngāmā*'[2] which stemmed from a disputed succession to the Barabhum Raj. In the preceding century, Raja Balak Narayan died leaving two sons, Raghunath and Lachman Singh; the latter, though younger by birth, was the son of the elder *pāṭ-rānī* and, as such, claimed to succeed. His claim was, however, rejected and he was driven out and shortly afterwards, as he continued to make efforts to wrest the estate from his brother, he was apprehended and later died in Midnapur jail. On Raghunath's death in 1798, an exactly similar dispute arose between his sons, Ganga Govinda and Madhab Singh, which was decided after lengthy litigation by the Sadar *Diwāni Adālat* in favour of the former, the eldest son. Madhab Singh settled his differences with his brother and became his *Diwan*, but unfortunately for himself, put himself in direct opposition

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. pp. 38-39.

[2] S. B. Chaudhuri's Civil Disturbances in India (1765-1857), Calcutta, 1955. pp. 101-02 gives a comprehensive account of this episode.

to Ganga Narayan Singh, son of his uncle Lachman, who had maintained his father's feud against the other branch of the family. Madhab deprived Ganga Narayan of Pancha-Sardāri, the largest of the *ghātwāli tarafs* which had been held by Lachman prior to his arrest and death in jail. Dewan Madhab appears to have made himself thoroughly unpopular by imposing additional taxes or rents on the holders of the different *ghāṭs* and a general house-tax or *ghartaki* throughout the estate. Over and above this, he went extensively into moneylending business at particularly usurious rates and made full use of the courts and his own official position to exact the utmost from his debtors. The odium in which he was held resulted in his murder on the 2nd of April 1832 by Ganga Narayan Singh who came upon him with a large force of *ghātwāls* from Pancha-Sardāri and Sātrākhani while he was checking his store of grains in an outlying village. Madhab was seized and taken to a small hill near Bamni and there deliberately murdered by Ganga Narayan himself; the latter, though he struck the first blow, insisted on every *ghātwāl* present shooting an arrow into the victim's body, ensuring thereby their continued co-operation with him, all being equally implicated in the murder. With a large body of *ghātwāls* thus attached to his cause, Ganga Narayan proceeded to grab the whole estate and on the 1st of May marched on Barabazar where the Munsiff's cutchery was attacked and the bazar plundered and the zemindar forced to concede all Ganga Narayan's demands including surrender of *taraf* Pancha-Sardari as also his *khorposh*, or subsistence grant, in order to escape being attacked in his own palace. On the following day, Ganga Narayan burnt down the Munsiff's and Salt *Dārogā's* cutcheries and the police thana. On the 14th, he attacked, with a force of three thousand Chuars, the troops brought up by the Magistrate, Russell. The latter tried to reason with the insurgents, but an essential condition of the parleys being the capitulation of the murderers of Madhab Singh, the negotiations failed. On the 4th, 5th and 6th of June, Russell's men were set upon on their march to Bamni and again on their retirement from that place to Barabazar with such effect that the whole of the Government force had to retreat to Bankura leaving Barabhum in the undisturbed possession of Ganga Narayan. A lull ensued but as soon as the rice crop had been planted out in August, Ganga Narayan collected his followers again and proceeded to plunder the estates of Akro, Ambikanagar, Raipur, Shyamsundarpur and Phulkusma to the east of Barabhum which now form a part of Bankura district. The Bhumijs of these areas as well as of Sildah (now in Midnapur) and Kailapal for the most part joined the insurgents and the whole countryside was in turmoil until the end of November when the 34th regiment of Native Infantry reached Raipur. Ganga Narayan had already retired through Dhalbhum (where he

had forced on the Raja one of his nominees as *ghāṭwāl* of Dompara) to Dhadka and later to Baridih, from which places expeditions were sent out by him to Gokulnagar and Puncha. The operations would probably have extended further north into the Panchet country but for the arrival of Braddon and Lieutenant Trimmer with a force of sepoys and *barkandāzes* and they succeeded in repelling an attack made on them by Ganga Narayan at Chakultor, a few miles south of Purulia. Braddon's force then re-occupied Barabazar, a thana was established at Balarampur and the intervening country was held in force and further incursions to the north were prevented. In November Dent assumed charge at Chakultor and offered a free pardon to all concerned in the disturbance except Ganga Narayan himself and some ten of the leading Sardars. As this offer bore no fruit, Dent proceeded to launch simultaneous attacks, on the night of the 16th November, on Bandhdih, Ganga Narayan's head-quarters, as also on Baridih and Bhaoni, those of two other leaders, all of which were successful. During the following month elaborate military operations were undertaken; small detachments were sent out in all directions through the hilly country to break up and destroy or secure the surrender of the now disorganized forces of Ganga Narayan who had then retired into Singhbhum with some of his followers and there he met with his death in attempting to establish among the Kols his reputation as a military leader by attacking a strong post held by Thakurdas, the chieftain of Khārsāwān. With Ganga Narayan's death the disturbances came to an end and order was quickly restored.[1]

As a consequence of the 'Ganga Narayan *Hāngāmā*' it was decided to change the administrative pattern of the Jungle Mahāls district. Regulation XIII of 1833 provided for the separation of certain tracts, included at that time in the districts of Ramgarh, Jungle Mahāls and Midnapur, from those districts and for placing them under an officer designated as the Agent to the Governor-General. So far as the Jungle Mahāls district was concerned, all the *mahāls* in that district except Senpahari, Shergarh and Vishnupur were to be included in the newly formed administrative unit, termed the South-West Frontier Agency, and placed under an Agent to the Governor-General. Senpahari, Shergarh and Vishnupur were merged with the district of Burdwan. The Agent to the Governor-General was to remain in charge of the administration of civil and criminal justice, the collection of revenue, the superintendence of police, land revenue, customs, Ābkāri, stamps and every branch of Government within the South-West Frontier Agency. The court of *Diwāni Adālat* was abolished and appeals against the decisions of the Agent and his

[1] This account of the 'Ganga Narayan *Hāngāmā*' is based on the description given by W. W. Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV. Calcutta, 1872.

assistants in civil suits were to lie to the Sadar *Diwāni Adālat* in Calcutta.

In 1866, Bankura suffered from a famine of great severity, the details of which are given in an Appendix to the District Handbook, Bankura, published in 1953.[1]

Without a word about a curious feature in the socio-economic set-up in this part of the country, a great many of its historical incidents would remain unexplained and even puzzling. There were large tracts of land in this area which were managed under a special agrarian system and the relations between various segments of the people that resulted from it have a direct bearing on the troubled and lawless conditions which prevailed here from time to time. "In Bishnupur," writes N. K. Sinha, "the farmers for the most part were *mandals* of villages by agreement among themselves. . . . Normally, no better terms could be obtained than the *mandals* proposed."[2] The settlement of lands under the headman system was almost universal among the Santal settlements in the district as also, to some extent, among the Bhumijs and other original inhabitants. The gradual impoverishment of these people, their growing indebtedness to the *mahājans* or moneylenders generated dissatisfaction which occasionally found expression in fairly widespread unrest.[3]

Another interesting feature in land relations in this district (as well as in some neighbouring ones, possibly because of the shared common factor of relative backwardness) which was not restricted only to Santals and other tribals was the very wide prevalence of payment of rent in produce and not in cash. The system of collection of *sānjā* rent through the actual produce of the land obtained till very recently, that is, even at a time when the price of a unit of the produce, in terms of money, had risen several fold than at the time when these rents were originally fixed.[4] It was only very natural, therefore, that this form of collection was hard on the tenants and constituted a reason for their grievances. Another age-old custom, initiated by the ancient rulers of the land and followed later by many land-holders, was to force their tenants into unremunerative (from the tenants' point of view) labour or *begār* which, if not as universal as *sānjā* was equally irksome.

[1] A. Mitra—Census 1951: West Bengal District Handbooks: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. Appendix IV (b) ('The Famine of 1866 in Bankura District' by Hunter).

[2] N. K. Sinha—Economic History of Bengal, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1962. p. 132.

[3] See also chapter on Land Revenue. More details may be found in M.C. McAlpin's Report on the Conditions of the Sonthals in the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapur and North Balasore. Calcutta, 1909. pp. 8-10, 28-31, 55-57, 64-66, 71-87.

[4] Also see chapter on Land Revenue. An idea of the nature of *sānjā* rent and also of *begār* may be found in West Bengal District Records, New Series, Burdwan. Vol. II. Introduction by R. Guha, pp. lxi-lxvii; and Settlement Report, Bankura (1917-24) by Robertson (Chapters III & IV). Calcutta, 1926.

Freedom struggle in the district: Indigo disturbances

During the revolt of 1857, the district was, on the whole, peaceful. According to O'Malley, "During the Mutiny (of 1857) the district remained tranquil and free from disturbance. There was for some time much apprehension regarding the Sheikhawati Battalion, of which a detachment was stationed at Bankura, an uneasiness increased by the vicinity of Chota Nagpur, where the main body was, and by a fear of an outbreak amongst the *Chuars* and Santāls inhabiting the country about Bankura. The distrust of the Battalion appears, however, to have passed away gradually; and in October, when there was again some fear of an outbreak among the Santāls, a wing was gladly welcomed at Bankura and served to allay the anxiety that was felt. Towards the end of October confidence was so far restored that the Magistrate of Bankura proposed to dismiss an extra establishment of *barkandāzes* which he had been allowed to entertain."[1]

As in some other districts of Bengal, the first signs of dissatisfaction against British rule stemmed from the atrocities committed on the peace-loving populace by the indigo factors. Messrs. Gisborne & Company opened a number of indigo plantations in the district in the latter part of the 19th century. The activities of one of the plantation managers, an Englishman named Scale, were adversely commented upon by the contemporary Bengali weekly newspaper *Somaprakās*.[2] It appears that prior to his appointment in Bankura, this gentleman was employed in an indigo plantation in Nadia district which had already acquired a notoriety for the inhuman torture of unwilling cultivators by the indigo factors. According to the *Somaprakās*, Scale tried to introduce at his new station the same oppressive methods that he was wont to use previously to compel the ryots to cultivate indigo. The farmers of Bankura, however, appear to have offered a stiff resistance against the forceful imposition of the cultivation of indigo, in which they had the support of the landlords. But they had the worst of the encounter inasmuch as the local Superintendent of Police, another Englishman, was on the side of the indigo planter. It appears that in November 1884, another English indigo planter was charged with the offence of trespass. The planter claimed to be tried by a jury but as no jury could be empanelled at Bankura, the case was first transferred to Burdwan and ultimately the Calcutta High Court called for the papers of the case. Although the final outcome of this criminal proceeding is not known, it appears from a contemporary report published in the influential journal *Sanjivani* that it entertained considerable misgivings about an impartial verdict in this case.

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[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 41.

[2] Fortnightly Secret Reports on the Native Newspapers in Bengal; week ending the [illegible]th April 1884.

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Agitation over recruitment of labour for tea plantations

In the closing years of the 19th century, the people of Bankura were rather agitated at the manner in which recruitment of labour for tea plantations in Assam was being made in the district. It appears that *ārkāṭis* or procuring agents used questionable methods, and in some cases it was alleged that they had used force to compel the labourers to sign contracts binding themselves for service in the tea gardens. The *Bānkurā Darpan*, a local newspaper, published a number of allegations from 1894 till the close of the century about the illegal methods adopted by the recruiting agents for enlisting labourers for service in the plantations in Assam.[1]

***Swadeshi* Movement in the district**

During the *Swadeshi* Movement, organized efforts were made in the district for the boycott of foreign goods. Between November 1907 and January 1908 there were 22 or 23 cases in the district in which young men raided shops of businessmen dealing in foreign goods and damaged the merchandise.[2] The method commonly used was to pour kerosene into bags of sugar and salt and to burn foreign cloths. The volunteers also warned the shopkeepers not to stock foreign goods for sale in future. It appears that the students of the Kotulpur and Kuchiakol schools took part in such raids under the leadership of the Bankura Secret Society. The Head Pundit of the Kuchiakol High School was dismissed for his suspected complicity in these incidents, but no arrest could be made by the police for want of sufficient evidence.[3] It is mentioned in contemporary official papers that no one could be found to give evidence against the students and others.

Cases of internment without trial

In 1918, many persons all over Bengal were interned without trial. In the Bankura district, two ladies, both named Sindhubala, were arrested by the police although only one of them was wanted. Both these *purdahnasin* ladies were taken from the Indas police station to Bankura by rail and were then made to walk from the railway station to the district police headquarters and were thereafter lodged in the Bankura jail. As there was not enough evidence against either of them, they were released after a few days. But their arrest and the treatment meted out to them caused widespread discontent in the minds of the people.

The Non-co-operation Movement

The resolution carried at the instance of Gandhiji at the Nagpur Congress of 1920, planning a countrywide non-cooperation movement made itself felt in the political life of the district in 1921.[4] Numerous students left their schools and colleges and plunged themselves into the struggle. As a part of this movement, a national college at Bankura and a number of national schools—both at high

[1] ibid. Weeks ending 27th March & 17th April 1897.
[2] ibid. (I. B. Records), Paper No. 51.
[3] ibid. Week ending 4th January 1908.
[4] Publicity brochure (in Bengali) of the 47th session of the W.B.P.C.C. at Govindanagar, Bankura, 25th April-27th April 1964; Calcutta, 1964. p. 24. Also, statement of Gobinda Chattopadhyay forwarded to the State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers.

school and middle school levels—were set up in Bankura town, at Gangajalghati (later transferred to Amar Kānan), in Vishnupur town and at Gosāipur in Vishnupur, at Sonamukhi proper and at Baḍa Chātrā in P.S. Sonamukhi. Most of these schools closed down after about two or three years, but the National School at Sonamukhi continued to function till 1926. The institution at Gangajalghati was transferred to Amar Kanan and came to be known as Deshabandhu Vidyalaya.[1]

Boycotting of law courts was one of the chief features of the Non-cooperation Movement. Several prominent members of the bar at Bankura gave up their practice and Congress workers went about setting up *Sālisi* Boards in numerous places which were to settle disputes among villagers without approaching the regular courts.[2]

From 1921 onwards, the movement gathered momentum and more than 150 local Congress committees sprang up in various parts of the district. A litho-printed political weekly came to enjoy a circulation of about 250 copies.[3] There was at the same time, an intensive and successful campaign for the widespread use of the *charkhā* (the spinning wheel), and substantial funds were collected for the purpose. One such centre of activity later became well known as Amar Kanan.[4]

At this time there was an agitation all over Bengal for staying away from the ceremonies in connexion with the ensuing visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta. Almost all the important Congress leaders of Bengal along with a large number of their followers were placed under arrest. More than a hundred volunteers banded themselves in Bankura and went to Calcutta to court arrest.[5]

Communal tensions: 1926-28

Relations between Hindus and Muslims in the district worsened in the third decade of this century.[6] In June 1928 there was a Hindu-Muslim riot in Bankura town but the matter did not assume serious proportions.

The Non-cooperation Movement continues

In July 1925 a criminal case was instituted under Section 124(a) of the I.P.C. against Sachindra Nath Sanyal, prisoner under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1925 for distributing by post copies of an allegedly seditious leaflet.[7] In August 1926 Sarojini Naidu addressed a public meeting at Bankura.[8] The Congress party decided in the same year to oppose the establishment of

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[1] W.B.P.C.C. publicity brochure, op. cit. p. 24.
[2] loc. cit.
[3] loc. cit.
[4] For Amar Kānan Āsram, in particular, see entry 'Amar Kānan' in the chapter on Places of Interest.
[5] W. B. P. C. C. publicity brochure. p. 25.
[6] Reports on the Native Newspapers; first half of July 1926, first half of January 1927, first half of May 1927, first half of June 1928, second half of June 1928, first half of July 1928, second half of July 1928, first half of August 1928, second half of August 1928 and second half of October 1928.
[7] Reports on the Native Newspapers; first half of July 1925.
[8] Reports on the Native Newspapers; first half of August 1926.

Union Boards in the district as a measure of non-cooperation with the authorities.[1] The Chairman of the Bankura District Board, who was a member of the Swarājya Party within the Congress, toured extensively throughout the district opposing the establishment of Union Boards and in April 1927, a decision was taken at the district conference of the Congress party to form committees in each thana to carry on propaganda against the formation of Union Boards. But all these attempts failed and Union Boards were duly established. The District Board of Bankura, as a protest, allotted only one rupee as grant to each Union Board for 1928. In the south-western part of the district a boycott of Union Board Presidents and Members was organized. The agitation against the Union Boards continued throughout 1929, 1930 and part of 1931, the local Congress party giving out that it would establish Congress Boards in place of the official Union Boards. The hold of the Congress over the district was amply demonstrated in 1929 when a Swarajist candidate was elected from the Bankura East non-Muhammadan Constituency defeating J. N. Gupta, a Moderate and formerly of the Indian Civil Service. A Congressman was also elected to the office of Chairman of the District Board but the Government refused to recognize the election and appointed another man in his place. In October 1929, boycott of foreign goods was organized[2] and volunteers picketed shops and urged people to use *khaddar*. In November 1929 the Headmasters of two local schools were prosecuted under Section 124(a) of the I.P.C. for having delivered allegedly seditious speeches at public meetings in September and October 1929[3] which resulted in their rigorous imprisonment for eight months and one year respectively.

The Civil Disobedience Movement

Gandhiji's arrest in 1930 touched off a *hartāl* in Bankura which marked the beginning of the subsequent phase of the movement in the district.[4] Liquor shops were picketed, four of them being burnt. During the second half of May 1930, sanction was accorded to the prosecution of several local leaders ending in convictions. Meanwhile, picketing of excise shops continued and Bankura was mentioned in the Secret Report of the Government for the second half of June 1930 as one of the most troubled districts. During the first

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[1] loc. cit. For an account of the agitation, second half of December 1926, second half of March 1927, first half of April 1927, second half of April 1927, second half of June 1927, second half of February 1928, second half of June 1928, first and second halves of April 1929, first and second halves of May & June 1929, second half of July 1929, first half of August 1929, first half of October 1929, first half of November 1929, first half of December 1929 & January, March and April 1930 etc. may be seen.

[2] Reports on Native Newspapers; first half of October 1929.

[3] Reports on Native Newspapers; first and second halves of November 1929 & first half of February 1930.

[4] Reports on Native Newspapers; first half of May 1930. Events up to the year 1933 have been described from the same set of reports, except where specified otherwise, corresponding to the periods indicated in the text.

half of July 1930, 261 persons were convicted in Bankura for picketing and offences connected with the Civil Disobedience Movement. During the second half of July 1930, similar convictions numbered 259 but in the first half of August, they fell sharply to 78 and by the first half of November 1930, the Civil Disobedience Movement in the district practically died out with the local officials expressing satisfaction over the prevailing situation. There was, however, a minor attempt to interfere with the Census operations of 1931, in which some women participated. In the first half of January 1931, there was a revival of the Civil Disobedience Movement when eleven chowkidars of the Bāmniā Union Board in P.S. Indas resigned. Three cases of arson took place at Vishnupur in which the house of a President of a Union Board and two *pachāi* (country liquor) shops were destroyed. In Bamnia Union, youths and women lay down in front of carts carrying properties attached on account of non-payment of Union Board rates and it was necessary in May 1931 to proceed against some political workers under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code. During the second half of March 1932, there was an organized attempt at Sonamukhi to manufacture contraband salt. In the first half of April, the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division reported that there were indications in Vishnupur subdivision of the existence of a campaign for non-payment of taxes. In March 1933, the provisions of Chapters II and III of the Bengal Public Security Act of 1932 were extended, among other areas, to Bankura as a precautionary measure against the proposed holding of the Congress session in Calcutta. In 1934, individual civil disobedience was started at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi but the movement aroused only a limited response in the district. As the tempo of the movement died down, Gandhiji advised his followers to turn their energies to the work of rural reconstruction.

Revolutionary terrorism

Due to the partial failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the district and owing to the fact that most of the important Congress leaders believing in non-violence were cast in prison, some of the revolutionary terrorist leaders and organizations found a chance to direct the struggle for independence according to their own ideas and techniques. In 1931, certain members of the Anusilan Party committed a mail robbery in *Kāñchanpurer Jaṅgal*, about 11 km. from Bankura town on the Bankura-Gangajalghati road. It was at this time that the members of the Jugāntar Party also became active. In 1932, they conspired to murder the S.D.O. of Vishnupur but the attempt to break into his bungalow by night was foiled by the vigilance of the guards. The Commissioner of Burdwan Division, in a report for the first half of April 1932, mentioned attempts by women to take possession of two police stations. On the 6th April, a revolver and a gun of the Circle Officer, Raipur

were stolen from his residence. In September 1932, army detachments had to be moved into the district. In 1934, a blacksmith was arrested in his workshop for repairing firearms of the terrorists. He too was transported to the Andamans for five years. There was also a mail robbery in Mirzāpur village in P.S. Kotulpur. During the same year the Jugantar Party, in collaboration with the Anusilan Party, conspired to kill in Bankura John Anderson, the Governor of Bengal, but the attempt failed and fourteen persons were arrested. In the following years frequent arrests were made on suspicion of conspiracy against the State.

The August 1942 Movement

On August 9, 1942, two Congress leaders were arrested unexpectedly while on their way back from the A.I.C.C. meeting at Bombay. This threw the Congress rank and file into a state of confusion and with no planned programme of action before them, unorganized and sporadic attempts at defiance of the law were made in many places of the district. In September, students of Bankura town boycotted schools and colleges and damaged the properties of a number of educational institutions. People burned down liquor shops at Bālsi, Natunchaṭi (in Bankura town) and Khatra and also post offices at Taldangra, Simlapal, Sarenga, Raipur, Balsi, Sonamukhi, Joypur, Kotulpur and Indas. National flags were hoisted on the Vishnupur court building and on the police stations of Joypur, Kotulpur and Indas. These incidents led to mass arrests and to the imposition of a punitive tax in Vishnupur town and Sonamukhi. The buildings and properties of the Abhay Āsram at Sonamukhi and Betur were seized in 1942. Although these were handed back in 1945, they had suffered considerable damage meanwhile. An attempt to wreck the railway track between Chhatna and Adra was foiled by the police but tracks of the B. D. R. Railway were uprooted at various points between Bankura and Indas. This led to the arrest of almost all the Congress leaders of the district and during their absence the movement died down.

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

POPULATION

Statistics for the district

According to the 1961 Census, Bankura district has a population of 16,64,513 persons of whom 8,40,423 are males and 8,24,092 females. The sex-ratio for the district stands at 1,000 males for every 981 females which compares favourably with that for West Bengal as a whole, namely 1,000 males per 878 females. According to the previous censuses, the sex-ratios in the district as a whole and in its rural and urban areas were as follows:

Year	Females per 1,000 males		
	District	Rural	Urban
1901	1,032	1,022	1,042
1911	1,024	1,034	1,012
1921	1,002	1,006	956
1931	996	1,000	927
1941	978	984	904
1951	981	984	946
1961	981	987	905

According to the figures published by the Survey of India and the Director of Land Records and Surveys, West Bengal, the district has an area of 2,653 and 2,647 sq. miles respectively The discrepancy is slight and may be overlooked. The density of population per sq. mile for the whole district works out to 627 persons as against the State average of 1,032. Bankura accounts for 4.76 per cent of the total population and 7.84 per cent of the total area of West Bengal. According to the 1961 Census, 15,42,356 persons live in rural areas spread over 2,621.2 sq. miles of the district and 1,22,157 persons live in urban regions covering 25.8 sq. miles only. The ratio between rural and urban populations is thus 93:7 as compared to the corresponding State ratio of 76:24. The rural-cum-urban population ratio for the district stood at 93:7 in 1951. It can be safely deduced from the foregoing statistics that the district is a predominantly rural one and that even its urban areas retain pronounced rural characteristics.

Statistics for Bankura subdivision

At the time of the 1961 Census count, Bankura or the Sadar subdivision had a population of 11,74,978 persons, of whom 5,95,530 were males and 5,79,448 females, thus registering a sex-ratio of 1,000

males to 973 females. The area covered by the subdivision being 1,933.5 sq. miles, the density of population works out to 608 persons per sq. mile. The subdivision houses 70.59 per cent of the total population in 72.88 per cent of the total area of the district. Villages in the Sadar subdivision together account for a population of 11,05,388 persons as against 69,590 persons living in urban areas, thus giving a rural-urban population ratio of 94:6.

Statistics for Vishnupur subdivision

The Vishnupur subdivision has, according to the 1961 Census, a population of 4,89,535—2,44,893 of the number being males and 2,44,642 females—thus accounting for a sex-ratio of 999 females per 1,000 males. The Vishnupur subdivision is 713.5 sq. miles in area and has a density of population of 686 persons per sq. mile. It shares 29.41 per cent of the total population and 27 per cent of the total area of the district. People living in rural and urban areas of the subdivision number 4,36,968 and 52,567 respectively giving the rural-urban population ratio of 88:12.

The population, the number of males and females, the sex-ratio and the density of population per sq. mile in each of the police stations of the district and the ratio of rural population to urban population in the thanas which have urban areas, are shown below in a tabular form according to 1961 Census figures:

Sl. No.	Police Station	Population			Sex-ratio (females per 1,000 males)	Density of population (persons per sq. mile)	Percentage ratio of rural to urban population
		Total	Male	Female			
1.	Bankura	1,76,746	90,424	86,322	954	1,121	64:36
2.	Onda	1,09,913	55,221	54,692	990	567	
3.	Chhatna	1,02,488	51,506	50,982	989	592	
4.	Gangajalghati	89,366	44,719	44,647	998	624	
5.	Barjora	91,817	46,181	45,636	988	604	
6.	Mejia	41,827	21,342	20,485	959	665	
7.	Saltora	70,736	35,579	35,157	988	682	
8.	Khatra	1,01,529	51,837	49,692	958	610	93:7
9.	Indpur	75,292	38,251	37,041	968	650	
10.	Ranibandh	66,604	34,036	32,568	956	403	
11.	Raipur	1,26,157	64,084	62,073	968	556	
12.	Simlapal	60,978	31,278	29,700	949	511	
13.	Taldangra	61,525	31,072	30,453	980	456	
14.	Vishnupur	1,01,243	51,130	50,113	980	691	69:31
15.	Joypur	70,980	35,379	35,601	1,006	703	
16.	Kotulpur	77,960	38,970	38,990	1,000	806	
17.	Sonamukhi	80,628	41,237	41,387	1,003	563	82:18
18.	Patrasayer	83,396	41,611	41,785	1,004	671	92:8
19.	Indas	73,332	36,566	36,766	1,005	744	

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The Bankura police station, containing 10.6 per cent of the total population, is the most crowded in the district with a population density of 1,121 persons per sq. mile. The density of population is least in Ranibandh where it is only 403 persons per sq. mile.

The eastern and central parts of the district consisting of the thanas of Joypur, Kotulpur, Indas, Patrasayer, Sonamukhi, Vishnupur, Bankura and Indpur are the most populous containing 40.03 per cent of the population but only 33 per cent of the area of the district. On the other hand, the south-western thanas of Khatra, Ranibandh, Raipur, Taldangra, Simlapal and Onda share 31.64 per cent of the population but 38.04 per cent of the total area of the district and thus constitute the most thinly inhabited region.

The first group of seven eastern and central police stations has a population of 6,66,281 persons in an area of 871.2 sq. miles and a density of population of 764 persons per sq. mile. The second group of six south-western thanas has an area of 1,007.3 sq. miles and a population of 5,26,706 persons—the density of population being only 522 persons per sq. mile.

The reasons for the difference in the density of population in the two aforesaid tracts are not far to seek. The eastern tract, which forms the lower and richer parts of the Dwarakeswar and the Damodar basins in the district, is a fertile alluvial plain capable of sustaining a denser population. The south-western parts of the district are extensively covered with scrub jungles or *sāl* forests. The terrain also exhibits a pronounced undulation and there are numerous groups of hills and isolated peaks in this area which form the eastern fringe of the Chotanagpur plateau. It is, accordingly, less cultivated than the former region. There are large expanses of barren lands here with red laterite soil interspersed with narrow stretches of cultivation on irregular patches of more recent alluvium. The density of population in the two regions, therefore, varies almost in proportion to their relative agricultural potential.

As a corollary of its natural advantages, the east-central portion contains four out of the five municipal and non-municipal Census towns in the district (Bankura, Vishnupur, Sonamukhi and Patrasayer) and has an urban population of 1,15,400 persons. The comparatively sparsely populated south-western portion has only one non-municipal Census town (Khatra) with a population of 6,757. It is interesting to note that during the 1951-61 decade, the overall population of the district increased by 26.17 per cent whereas those of the east-central and south-western portions increased by 34.3 and 20.46 per cent respectively. The density of population per sq. mile in the district increased from 498 in 1951 to 629 in 1961 but the corresponding increases in the east-central and south-western regions were from 569 to 764 and from 434 to 522 respectively. The increase of

population during the 1951-61 decade, in absolute terms and in terms of density, has been the highest in the east-central tract and the least in the south-western tract.

During the period 1872-1901, the population of the district could not grow fast enough due to the widespread prevalence of malaria, especially in the agriculturally rich alluvial tract, occurrence of cholera, general deterioration in the conditions of the Damodar and the Dwarakeswar rivers, continued scarcities and the existence of the tyrannous *sānjā* or produce rent of land. The decennial percentage variation of population in each decade from 1901 to 1961 is shown below:

1901-11	+ 1.99
1911-21	−10.43
1921-31	+ 9.00
1931-41	+16.00
1941-51	+ 2.30
1951-61	+26.17

The nominal increase during 1901-11 was due to a scarcity at the close of 1907, prevalence of malaria in the Vishnupur subdivision and the seasonal emigration of tribals and low caste Hindus to neighbouring districts for employment. The decline of population by as much as 10.43 per cent during the next decade was due to the famine of 1915-16, the influenza epidemic succeeding it, ravages of malaria etc. In the succeeding decade, the district recovered a bit and the population increased by 9 per cent. The process of recovery was helped by the immigration of labourers from outside the district to the mills that were opened in Onda and Chhatna police stations. It is to be noted that this increase took place in spite of endemic attacks of malaria during the decade. During 1931-41, the district recorded a population growth of 16 per cent notwithstanding the combined flood and drought of 1934. In the next decade, however, the population increased only nominally by 2.30 per cent due to the great famine of 1943, occurrence of epidemics in 1944 and large-scale emigration of labour for employment in other districts. The population of the district increased by as much as 26.17 per cent during 1951-61.

The following table presents a sectional picture of percentages of age-groups 0-5 and 15-60 as also of married women of the

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age-group of 15-40 to the total population in the district from 1901 to 1961:

Year	Percentage of persons, males and females, to the total sexwise population						Percentage of married women (15-40) to total population
	Age-group 0-5			Age-group 15-60			
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	
1901	40.0	41.9	38.2	54.6	53.6	55.5	15.7
1911	38.9	40.4	37.3	55.9	55.1	56.8	16.3
1921	36.9	38.1	35.7	58.6	58.0	59.1	16.0
1931	37.6	38.8	36.2	58.4	57.6	59.4	16 9
1941	37.0	37.6	36.5	58.5	58.2	58.6	16.1
1951	41.2	43.4	38.9	52.5	52.0	52.9	13.6
1961	41.1	41.6	40.5	53.4	53.4	53.4	16.5

The table clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of the population to any natural calamity and shows the comparatively low mean age of the population. It also shows how at the end of each decade a crop of young children helps register growth of the population during the next Census. The appalling effects that the famine and epidemics of 1943-44 had on the population of working age is also very clear from these figures. A big crop of young children born after the famine to a heavily reduced number of mothers helped the district to turn out better population statistics for the 1951 Census.

Emigration and immigration

The district figures of emigrants and immigrants for the decades from 1891 to 1961 are given below:

Decade ending in	Emigration	Immigration
1891	11,060	2,878
1901	22,112	11,195
1911	56,000	13,932
1921	29 000	11,761
1931	29,661	14,645
1941	35,368	20,850
1951	59,238	30,350
1961	*	26,770

*Figure not available

Emigration from the district of Bankura has always been heavy and the number of emigrants appears to have exceeded the number of immigrants in the ratio of almost 2:1 even during the 1941-51 decade when there was an influx of displaced persons from East Pakistan. In 1916, about 4,500 Bankura people were recruited for the Assam tea gardens as against a total of less than 200 in the year

before. Economic distress has always led some people to emigrate in search of employment in other districts. The fact that the level of agricultural overcrowding in Bankura is lower than in the neighbouring districts is attributable, among other reasons, to this high rate of emigration.

During 1951-61, the population of West Bengal as a whole increased by 32.79 per cent and the percentage increase of population in all the neighbouring districts was also considerably higher than in Bankura. Yet, compared to the earlier decades, and for the first time since 1901, Bankura appears to have been rather free from scarcities and diseases during 1951-61. The highest percentage increase in the growth of population of the district since 1901 was attained during this period because of the notable advancement made in the fields of rural uplift, public health and sanitation, medical facilities and general education. During the 60 years from 1901 to 1961, the growth of population in Bankura was the least among all West Bengal districts. The percentage increase over this period was 49.10 in Bankura against 106.18 for the whole State. The Damodar Valley Project and especially the Kangsabati Project, when fully implemented, would improve agricultural conditions leading possibly to a faster growth of population in the district.

Displaced persons

According to the 1951 Census, 9,294 persons migrated to the district from East Pakistan and according to the Census of 1961, 11,344 persons born in Pakistan have been living in Bankura for ten years. A large number of the former group must have moved out of the district so that the total number of persons in Bankura who were born in Pakistan were 14,878 according to the 1961 Census. These displaced persons are spread over all the thanas of the district in varying densities. Vishnupur police station has the largest share with 5,286 immigrants from Pakistan while Bankura, Patrasayer and Sonamukhi police stations also have a large number of immigrants in their populations. The Bankura-Barjora-Sonamukhi-Patrasayer-Indas-Kotulpur-Vishnupur-Onda tract shelters about 90 per cent of the total immigrant population from East Pakistan.

According to the statistics furnished by the District Magistrate, several displaced persons' camps, accommodating 3,800 persons, were opened in the district in 1949. A large number of the refugees were rehabilitated and the number of inmates of these camps came down to 26 in 1953. A fresh influx, however, occurred in 1954 and 1955 raising the number again to 9,483 which fell to 29 in 1958. A total number of 1,256 families, consisting of 6,393 persons, were rehabilitated in the Sadar subdivision of the district between 1950 and 1960.

LANGUAGES

Bengali

Bengali is by far the most important language of the district. There is, however, a sizable Sāntāli speaking minority in the north-western

thanas of Saltora, Mejia and Chhatna and the south and south-western thanas of Khatra, Ranibandh, Simlapal, Raipur and Taldangra. According to the Census of 1961, Bengali is the mother tongue of 15,08,059 persons (7,61,259 males and 7,46,800 females) representing 90.60 per cent of the total population of the district. Another 81,705 persons or 4.9 per cent of the total population also know Bengali. Thus 15,89,764 persons or 95.50 per cent of the population of the district are Bengali knowing. Those who have Bengali as their mother tongue form more than 95 per cent of the population of Bankura, Onda, Gangajalghati, Barjora, Mejia, Indpur, Joypur, Kotulpur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas police stations. The same language group forms more than 85 per cent of the population of Vishnupur, Khatra, Simlapal and Taldangra; more than 80 per cent of the population of Saltora; more than 75 per cent of the population of Chhatna and Raipur and more than 60 per cent of the population of Ranibandh thana.

Sāntāli

Sāntāli is the mother tongue of 1,45,711 persons (72,333 males and 73,378 females) accounting for 8.76 per cent of the total population of the district. A few hundred having other languages as their mother tongues also know Sāntāli.

"Sāntāli is the most important of all the languages of the Mundā Group. The total number of Sāntāli speaking people in India is about 25 lakhs, of which 40 per cent (nearly 10 lakhs) are in West Bengal and 14 per cent of them again (1,40,000) are in the Bankura district."[1]

Those having Sāntāli as their mother tongue consititute a little more than 35 per cent of the population of Ranibandh, over 20 per cent of the population of Raipur and Chhatna, more than 15 per cent of the population of Saltora and a little over 10 per cent of the population of Khatra, Simlapal and Taldangra thanas. Excepting the Barjora police station where Santals account for a little less than 1 per cent of the total population, in all the remaining thanas of the district, the Sāntāli speakers constitute a little over 1 per cent of the respective total populations.

The following table shows the number and percentage of people having Bengali and Sāntāli as their mother tongues in the two subdivisions and the different police stations of the district.

Administrative Unit	Persons having	
	Bengali mother tongue	Sāntāli mother tongue
District	15,08,059 (90.60)	1,45,711 (8.76)
Subdivisions		
(1) Bankura	10,33,595 (87.96)	1,33,121 (11.33)
(2) Vishnupur	4,74,464 (96.92)	12,590 (2.57)

[1] Amal Kumar Das—'Language and Dialects of the Tribals of West Bengal', in [illegible], July 1958. pp. 130-40.

Administrative Unit	Persons having	
	Bengali mother tongue	Sāntāli mother tongue
Police Stations		
(1) Bankura	1,69,860 (96.10)	3,338 (1.88)
(2) Onda	1,04,549 (95.12)	5,259 (4.78)
(3) Chhatna	81,068 (79.1)	21,191 (20.67)
(4) Gangajalghati	86,166 (96.42)	3,168 (3.54)
(5) Barjora	90,742 (98.83)	878 (0.95)
(6) Mejia	41,050 (98.14)	514 (1.23)
(7) Saltora	57,797 (81.70)	11,904 (16.83)
(8) Khatra	86,634 (85.33)	13,817 (13.60)
(9) Indpur	71,565 (95.05)	3,627 (4.82)
(10) Ranibandh	41,550 (62.38)	24,166 (36.28)
(11) Raipur	97,841 (77.55)	27,990 (22.10)
(12) Simlapal	52,077 (85.40)	8,811 (14.45)
(13) Taldangra	52,696 (85.65)	8,458 (13.75)
(14) Vishnupur	95,665 (94.49)	4,714 (4.65)
(15) Joypur	69,305 (97.64)	1,194 (1.68)
(16) Kotulpur	76,118 (97.64)	1,552 (1.99)
(17) Sonamukhi	79,394 (96.09)	2,613 (3.16)
(18) Patrasayer	81,883 (98.12)	1,507 (1.80)
(19) Indas	72,149 (98.39)	1,010 (1.38)

N.B. Figures within brackets represent percentages of total populations of respective 'units'.

Other languages

Hindi is the mother tongue of 1.39 per cent of population of the Bankura thana and most of the Hindi speakers, who are not autochthones of the district, reside in Bankura town. The population percentage of Hindi speakers in other parts of the district is insignificant.

There are 477 males and 469 females, mostly Muslims, who returned Urdu as their mother tongue during the 1961 Census. Many of them have been residing in the district for more than two generations.

According to the same Census figures, 913 males and 204 females returned Oriyā as their mother tongue. Not every one of these 1,117 persons, however, is a first or second generation immigrant having kinship connexions with the area of emigration in Orissa.

The Oriyā speaking group, whose ancestors migrated to the district many generations ago, are concentrated mostly in the Simlapal and Raipur police stations.

There are 319 males and 264 females in the district whose mother tongue is Koḍā, which belongs to the Mundā branch and, as spoken in the district, is a dialect of the Koḍā language.

31 males and 643 females have the Kurukh (Orāon) language (including those having *Ādibhāsā*, identified to be a dialect of this language) as their mother tongue. This language belongs to the intermediate group of the Dravidian family of languages.

Variations in sizes of language groups

In 1931, there were 9,94,953 Bengali-speaking persons (4,98,117 males and 4,96,836 females) in the district representing 89.5 per cent of the then total population of 11,11,720 persons. Sāntāli was then the mother tongue of 1,09,689 persons (54,765 males and 54,924 females) accounting for 10 per cent of the total population. Hindi, at that time, was the mother tongue of 3,720 persons, Urdu of 351 persons, Oriyā of 170 persons, Koḍā of 1,143 persons and Kurukh (Orāon) of 10 persons only.

In 1901, 10,12,304 persons out of 11,16,411 returned Bengali as their mother tongue representing 90.7 per cent of the total population of the district. Sāntāli was then the mother tongue of 98,521 persons accounting for 8.9 per cent of the district population. Hindi, at that time, was spoken by 0.35 per cent of the people, Orāon by 196 persons, Koḍā by 867 persons and Khariā, another language of the Mundā group, by 224 persons.

People who returned Bengali as their mother tongue in the foregoing Census counts included all those who were ethnically Bengalis as also sizable proportions of those who were ethnically non-Bengalis. Thus, in the Report of the Census of India, 1901, Vol. VIA, Bengal. Part II, Tables by E. A. Gait, we find a total number of 19,785 Bhumijs in the district but none of them returned the Bhumij language as his mother tongue, all recording the Bengali language in its place. In the same year, 93.2 per cent of the Santals declared Sāntāli and the rest of them Bengali as their mother tongues while only 867 of the 4,970 Koras in the district professed Koḍā as their spoken language, the rest declaring Bengali as their mother tongue. In 1931, 95.7 per cent of the Santals declared Sāntāli and the remainder Bengali as their mother tongues while in 1951 at least 10 per cent of them returned Bengali as their spoken language. It would thus appear that while the Bengalis have invariably returned Bengali as their mother tongue, sizable proportions of the tribal groups have also returned the same language as their spoken language. Significantly, there is no trend in the direction of tribals showing any other tribal language as their mother tongue, the preference being exercised, over the decades, only in favour of the Bengali language.

Bilingualism

According to the 1961 Census, 1,23,610 persons or 7.43 per cent of the population of the district are bilingual; they speak at least one language other than their mother tongue. 41,263 persons (38,454 males and 2,809 females) out of a total of 15,08,059 (i.e. 2.7 per cent) having Bengali as their mother tongue know at least one subsidiary language. Of them, as many as 32,760 (31,095 males and 1,665 females), or 2.2 per cent of the Bengali speaking population, know English which they must have picked up through institutional learning processes. It may be presumed that a large proportion of the 5,683 persons who returned Hindi or the 1,534 persons who returned Urdu as their subsidiary languages did not have to learn them through schools. It may also be assumed that the majority of the 723 persons (516 males and 207 females) who returned Sāntāli or the majority of the 125 persons who returned Koḍā as their respective subsidiary languages, were ethnically Santals and Koras who had earlier returned Bengali as their mother tongues. For them, perhaps, no schooling was necessary to learn these subsidiary languages.

Of the Santali population of 1,45,711 persons, 78,987 (or 54.2 per cent) are reported as bilingual in the 1961 Census. As many as 78,850 of them (38,271 males and 40,579 females) returned Bengali as the subsidiary language of their knowing. 73 (33 males and 40 females) returned Hindi and 64 (62 males and 2 females) returned English as their subsidiary languages. In those thanas of the district where transport facilities are adequate and where the Bengali and the Santal villages are not far apart, frequent contacts help the Santals understand and speak Bengali even before they reach their teens. Those of them who live in isolated hamlets in Saltora, Mejia, Chhatna, Khatra, Ranibandh, Raipur and Simlapal thanas away from Bengali-speaking villages and modern routes of communications, generally remain monolingual but the few among them who have to maintain contact with distant markets etc. pick up Bengali a little later in their lives. It is worthy of notice that in their conversation with the Santals, the Bengalis and others seldom use Sāntāli; it is the Santals who are always expected to communicate in Bengali or in a mixed language resembling it.[1]

According to the 1961 Census, 404 out of the 577 Koḍā-speaking people are bilingual. In this language group everyone, excepting children below teens, is a bilingual. 386 Koras (225 males and 161 females) know Bengali and 18 females are conversant with Sāntāli.

Of a total of 674 persons (31 males and 643 females) with Kurukh/Orāon (including 285 females who returned *Ādibhāsā*, identified with Kurukh/Orāon) as their mother tongue, only 81 persons (10

[1] Information gathered from Bejoykumar Hembram and other Santal gentlemen of Ranibandh police station living in Sibpur, Howrah and from field investigations in Chhatna police station.

males and 71 females) are bilingual. Kurukh/Orāon speakers, therefore, seem to be the least affected by bilingualism amongst all the tribals of the district ; 10 males and 49 females among them know Bengali and 17 females know Hindi.

An important aspect of bilingualism is the wide disparity between the numbers of males and females having command over English—men far outnumbering women. This is perhaps due to the institutionalized processes and ancillary difficulties involved in learning the language.

The local Bengali dialect: Grierson's views

Grierson[1] has characterized the Bengali dialect spoken in Bankura as Western Bengali. According to him, the Western dialect differs from Standard Bengali in having a broader pronunciation. Thus a long *ŏ* is often substituted for the *a* of standard Bengali, e.g. *bŏllē* (pronounced *bollē*), meaning he said, for *balila* (pronounced *bolilō*); *hōla* (pronounced *hōlō*) for *haïla*, meaning he was. On the other hand, a Standard Bengali *o* often becomes *u*. Thus *chhuṭu*, meaning small, for *chhōṭa* (pronounced *chhōṭō*); *tumār*, meaning your, for *tōmār*. The vowel *ē* is often written *ʸā* and is pronounced *ǎ* like short *a* in *hat*. Thus *ēk*, meaning one, is pronounced *ǎk*, and *gēla* (pronounced *gēlō*), meaning he went, is often written *gʸāla* and pronounced *gǎlō*.

In this dialect the letter *n* of Standard Bengali is frequently substituted by *l*. Thus, we have *laī* (pronounced *lōy*), meaning there is not or I am not, for *naī*. *Nāch* (meaning dance) of Standard Bengali becomes *lāch*; *nāo* or *nā* (a boat) becomes *lā* and *nadī* (river) of Standard Bengali is transformed in local pronunciation to *ladī*. A tendency towards nasalizing the final vowel of a verb is also noticeable in the dialect. Thus, *khēyē̃* instead of *khēyē* (standard colloquial for *khāiyā*), meaning having eaten; *karī*, for *kari*, meaning I do.

The old singular forms of personal pronouns (*mui* meaning I and *tui* meaning thou) are frequently used instead of the standard *āmi* and *tumi*. In the conjugation of verbs, the old singular forms, which are now obsolete in Standard Bengali, are frequently met with. Thus, *māgli* (I asked for) is used instead of the standard *māgilām*; *balli* (pronounced *bōlli*) for *balilām*. Similarly, in the Second Person we find *āchhis*, for *āchha* (thou art) and so on. In the Third Person of the past tense we find the three following terminations, *ō*, with intransitive, and *ē* and *ēk* with transitive verbs. Thus *hōlō* (he was), *ballē* or *ballēk* (he said) instead of the Standard *haila* or *balila*. The tendency to contract verbal forms is very marked in the Conjunctive Participle of casual verbs. Thus, we have *uḍiyē* for *uḍāiyā* (having caused to fly) and *bulīyē* for *bolāiyā* (having summoned).

Two specimens of the Western Dialect quoted by Grierson are

[1] G. A. Grierson—Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V, Indo-Aryan Family: Eastern Group. Calcutta, 1899. pp. 59-62.

reproduced below both in Bengali and Roman scripts. The first[1] was collected by him from a region in the modern Bankura district away from the Burdwan border while the latter[2] from an area adjoining it:

কোন লোকের দুইটি ছেলে ছিলো। তাদের মদ্দে ছোটটি তার বাপকে বল্লে, "বাবা, তোমার বিষয়ের যে ভাগ আমি পাবো, আমায় দাও।" তার বাপ বিষয় ভাগ করো্য দিলে। কিছুদিন পরে ছোট ছেলে বিষয়-আশয় একত্তর করো্য দূর দেশ দিয়ো্য চলো্য গেল। সেখানে যেয়ো্য খুব খরচ-পত্তর করো্য সব বিষয় উড়িয়ো্য দিলে। উড়িয়ো্য দিলে পর, সেখানে ভারি আকাল হ'লো, তার খুব দুঃখু হ'লো। তখন সে সেই দেশের এক গ্যেরোস্তর ঘরে চাকর রইলো, আর তার মনিবের মাটে শুয়োর চড়াতে নাগলো। শুয়োরে যে ভূঁষি খেতো সেই ভূঁষি খেয়ো্য আপনার পেটটা ভরাতে ইচ্ছা কল্লে, কিন্তু কেউ তাকে তা খেতে দিলে না। তার যখন হোঁশ হ'লো, সে মনে মনে কল্লে যে তার বাপের বাড়িতে কত মাইনে করা চাকর রয়োচে, আর তারা খুব খেতে পাচ্চে, আর সে হেতা ক্ষিদেয় মচ্চে। "আমি উটো্য আমার বাপের কাচে যাবো; তাকে বলবো, 'বাবা, আমি সগ্গের বিরুদ্দে ও তোমার সুমুকে পাপ করিচি। আমি আর তোমার পুত্তুর হবার যুগ্যি নেই। আমাকে তোমার এ্যক জন মাইনে খেকো জন-মজুরের মত রাখ।' "

Kōna (kōnō) *lōkēr dui-ṭī* *chhēlē*
Certain person's two sons

chhilō. *Tādēr* *maddē* *Chhōṭa-ṭī* *tār*
were. Of-them among the-younger his

bāp-kē *bōllē,* *"bābā,* *tōmār* *bishayēr*
father-to said, "father, thy of-property

jē *bhāg* *āmi* *pābo,* *āmāy* *dāō."*
what share I shall-get, to-me give."

Tār *bāp* *bishay* *bhāg* *karē*
His father property division having-done

dilē. *Kichhu* *din* *parē* *chhōṭa* *chhēlē*
gave. Some days after the-younger son

bishay-āśay *ēkattar* *karē* *dūr*
property-etc. collected having-made distant

dēś *diyē* *chalē-gēla.* *Sēkhānē* *jēyē*
country towards went-away. There going

khub *kharach-pattar* *karē* *sab*
much extravagant-expenses having-done all

[1] G. A. Grierson—Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V, Part I. Calcutta, 1903. pp. 83-85.
[2] ibid. p. 86.

bishay uḍiyē-dilē. Uḍiyē-dilē
property squandered-away. Having-squandered-away

par sē-khānē bhāri ākāl hōlō,
after there great scarcity became,

tār khub dukshu (dukkhu) hōlō. Takhan sē
his much adversity became. Then he

sēi dēśēr ēk gērōstar gharē
that of-country a householder's in-the-house

chākar raïlō, ār tār manibēr māṭē
servant remained, and his master's in-field

śūor charātē nāglō. Śūorē jē bhūshi
hogs to-tend began. The-hogs which husks

khētō sēi bhūshi khēyē āpnār pēṭṭā
used-to-eat those husks eating his-own belly

bharātē ichchhā-kallē, kintu kēu tā-kē tā
to-fill wish-he-made, but any-one him that

khētē dilē-nā. Tār jakhan hōś hōlō, sē
to-eat did-not-give. His when senses came, he

manē-manē kallē jē, tār bāpēr bāḍitē
in-mind made that, his father's in-house

kata māinē-karā chākar rayēchē, ār tārā
how-many month-paid servants are, and they

khub khētē pāchchē, ār sē hētā kshidēy
much to-eat receive, and he here in-hunger

machchē. "Āmi uṭē āmār bāpēr kāchē
is-dying. "I having-arisen my father's near

jābō; tā-kē balbō, 'bābā, āmi saggēr
will-go; him-to I-will-say, 'father, I of-heaven

biruddē ō tōmār sumukē pāp
in-opposition and of-thee in-presence sin

karichi.	*Āmi*	*ār*	*tōmār*	*puttur*	*habār*
have-committed.	I	any-more	thy	son	of-being

jugyi	*nēi.*	*Āmā-kē*	*tōmār*	*ĕk*	*jan*
fit	am-not.	Me	thy	one	person

māinĕ	*khēkō*	*jan-majurēr*	*mata*	*rākha.' "*
monthly-(pay)	eater	coolie	like	keep.' "*

* Italics—Editor's.

আমি বর্দ্ধমান রেল লোকোমোটিব আপিসে চাপরাশি-গিরি চাকুরী করি। আজ রাত আন্দাজি চার-টের সময় রেল-গাড়ির জানালি মহম্মদ-কে তার বাসা বাজে প্রতাপপুর থেকে ডাকতে যাচ্ছিনু। রাস্তা ভুল্যে এক-টু বেশী উত্তুর দিগে গিয়েচিনু। তার পর ফির্যে গির্যে গলি-রাস্তায় রহমান-কে ডাকতে যাব এমন-সময় চোর চোর বল্যে আমা-কে ধর্য়েচে। আমি সন্দের পর থেকে রাত চারটে পর্য্যন্ত আপিসে ছিনু। তাহা ঘরবরণ ও হরি বাগদি চাপরাশি জানে। আমি চুরি করি নেই। আমি জানি-না সে কেন আমার নামে এমন মিছে অপবাদ দিচ্চে।

Āmi	*Barddamān*	*rēl*	*lōkōmōṭib*	*āpisē*
I	Burdwan	rail	locomotive	in-office

chāprāśi-giri	*chākuri*	*kari.*	*Āj*	*rāt*
chāprāsi-hood	service	do.	This-day	night

āndāji	*chār-ṭēr*	*samay*	*rēl-gāḍir*	*Jānāli*
about	four	in-time	rail-cart's	Jānāli

Mahammad-kē	*tār*	*bāsā*	*Bājē*	*Pratāppur*	*thēkē*
Mohammad	his	lodging	Bājē	Pratāppur	from

dāktē	*jāchchinu.*	*Rāstā*	*bhulĕ*	*ēk-ṭu*
to-call	I-was-going.	Road	missing	little

bēśī	*uttur*	*digē*	*giyĕchinu.*	*Tārpar*
more	north	side	I-had-gone.	Afterwards

phirĕ-giyĕ	*gali-rāstāy*	*Rahamān-kē*	*dāktē*	*jāba*
returning	in-lane	Rahmān	to-call	going

ēman-samay	*chōr chōr*	*balĕ*	*āmā-kē*
at-this-time	thief thief	shouting	me

dharĕchē.	*Āmi*	*sandēr*	*par*	*thēkē*	*rāt*
caught.	I	evening	after	since	night

chārtē	*parjyanta*	*āpisē*	*chhinu.*	*Tāhā*
four	till	in-office	was.	This

Gharbaran	*ō*	*Hari*	*Bāgdi*	*chāprāśī*	*jānē.*
Gharbaran	and	Hari	Bāgdi	chāprāsī	know.

Āmi	*churi*	*kari*	*nēi.*	*Āmi*	*jāni-nā*
I	theft	committed	have-not.	I	do-not-know

sē	*kēna*	*āmār*	*nāmē*	*ēman*	*michhē*	*apabād*
he	why	my	in-name	such	false	blame

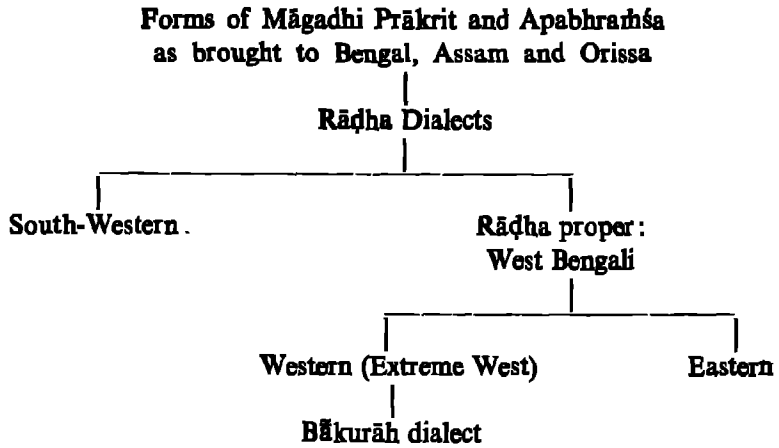
dichchē.
is-giving.*

* Italics—Editor's.

The principal peculiarity of these dialects is the tendency to disaspirate aspirated letters. Thus we have *maddē* for *madhyē* (meaning among); *uṭē* for *uṭhiyā* (meaning having arisen); *kāchē* for *kāchhē* (meaning near); *biruddē* for *biruddhē* (meaning in opposition); *sumukē* for *sammukhē* (meaning in presence); *karichi* for *karechhi* (meaning I have done). Forms like *saggēr* for *svargēr* (meaning of heaven) are also worthy of notice since they illustrate the common tendency amongst all Bengali speakers to drop an *r* at the commencement of a compound letter and to double the other member of the compound in compensation. The forms of the negative auxiliary are instructive. They are *nēi* (meaning I am not) or *nii* (meaning thou art not). They are also used like the standard *nāi* to represent a past negative with the present tense, e.g. *āmi churi kari nēi* (I did not commit theft); *tumi dāō nii* (thou didst not give) etc. This is quite different from Standard Bengali in which *nai* or *nahi* is the negative auxiliary, while *nāi* gives a past negative sense to a present tense. In the second specimen, we have the old form of the verb used with a first person singular nominative, e.g. *giyēchhinu* for *giyāchhilām*.

Suniti Kumar Chatterji's views

Suniti Kumar Chatterji[1] has characterized the dialect spoken in Bankura as the Western Rāḍha dialect. Its genealogical derivation, as suggested by him, is given below:

[1] Suniti Kumar Chatterji—The Origin and Development of Bengali Language. Calcutta, 1926. p. 140.

According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the Western Rāḍha dialect is characterized by a fondness for nasalization, especially in the verbal indeclinable in ≪iā≫; in the literary Middle Bengali, this West Rāḍha feature is prominent in some authors, e.g. Standard Bengali রাখিয়া ≪rākhiyā≫ West Rāḍha রাখ্যাঁ রাখেঁ ≪rākkhẽ≫, written in Middle Bengali in the form রাখিঞা ≪rākhiñā≫. As regards the consonants, inter-vocal ≪-h-≫ is weak in all dialects, except in West Rāḍha, where ≪-h-≫ is often brought in to give force to a stressed and emphatic syllable. The standard literary Bengali হইবে ≪håibē≫, is used in Western Rāḍha as হইবেক ≪håibēk≫. In the declension of nouns, Western Rāḍha has the common Bengali plural affix -গুলো ≪gulå≫ in the form of -গুলাক ≪gul-ā-k≫.

Rāḍha (South-West Bengali, West Rāḍha, West-Central Bengali), Varendra and Kāmarūpa agree in having -কে, ক ≪-ke, -k≫ as the proper affix for the dative. The locative affix is ≪-t-ē≫ in Rāḍha. The post-positions are numerous, and each group shows its special predilections, e.g. in the Rāḍha dialect সঙ্গে ≪sångē≫ would be preferred to সাথে or সহিত, meaning 'with'. As regards pronouns, West Rāḍha has strong forms like ≪mōhår or måhår≫, meaning 'my', which is equivalent to মোর ≪mōr≫ in Standard Bengali. In conjugation, the affix ≪-i-≫ for the first person past tense is found in South-West Bengali (as in Oḍiyā) and in Western Rāḍha, e.g. ≪*mui di-l-i*≫ meaning 'I gave'; but it is absent in the other dialects.

Sāntāli dialect

Sāntāli, the second important language in the district, is, according to Grierson,[1] "a remarkably uniform language, having only two dialects. Even these two dialects do not differ much from the standard

[1] G. A. Grierson—Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. IV, Muṇḍā and Dravidian Language. Calcutta, 1906. pp. 30-35.

form of speech. They are the so-called Kārmālī, spoken by the Kalha tribe in the Santal Parganas, Manbhum and Hazaribagh, and the dialect of the Mahles spoken in the central and southern portions of the Santal Parganas and the adjoining parts of Birbhum and Manbhum.

"Sāntālī has, to some extent, been influenced by the neighbouring Aryan languages. This influence is, however, mainly confined to the vocabulary though we can see how Aryan suffixes and Aryan syntax are beginning to make themselves felt, and some of the most usual post-positions are perhaps Aryan. Broadly speaking, however, the structure and general character of the language has remained unchanged."

Grierson finds that towards the east, the language tends to come under the spell of Bengali, and in the south the influence of Oriya is traceable. The different sources from which words have been borrowed influence to some extent the form in which they are adopted. In this way a slight difference has crept into the Sāntāli of the Bengal districts as distinguished from that spoken in other places. The influence of Bengali, which Grierson thinks to be of a relatively modern date, has lately been gradually spreading. He observes that "the purest Sāntālī is spoken in the north, especially in the Sāntāl Parganās and in Mānbhūm. The dialect spoken in Midnāpur, Balasore, Singbhūm and the Orissa Tributary States is more mixed; it shows signs of gradually yielding to Aryan influence. . . . Locality, to some extent, causes differences in vocabulary, and . . . this fact, in recent times, has given rise to a slight difference in dialect between the east, where most loan-words come from Bengali, and the west which chiefly borrows from Bihari, and the south where the influence of Oriya is felt. On the whole, however, there is scarcely any difference in dialect from Bhāgalpur in the north down to Mānbhūm and Burdwan in the south."

Nabendu Dutta-Majumdar[1] has made the interesting observation that the Bengali the Santals speak, is, however, cast into the grammatical mould of Sāntāli, especially in the case of illiterate Santals. This remark, although based on the speech of the Santals of Birbhum district, is equally applicable to that of the Santals residing in Bankura.

Koḍā dialect

In 1906, Grierson remarked, "Koḍā language (in Bankura) is very corrupt and it seems to show that the Koḍās (Korās) of Bankura will soon abandon their old tongue for Bengali." This gloomy forecast has, however, not come true. Although the number of Koḍā speakers in the district is on the wane, 583 of them were enumerated during the 1961 Census.

[1] Nabendu Dutta-Majumdar—The Santals: A Study in Culture-Change. New Delhi, 1956.

RELIGION AND CASTE

The Census of 1961 gives the following break-up of the population of the district according to the religious faiths professed by them.

RELIGIONWISE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT IN 1961

Religious Community	Total	Rural	Urban
Buddhist	16	15	1
Christian	2,090	1,741	349
Hindu	15,59,399	14,40,514	1,18,885
Jain	186	147	39
Muslim	73,007	70,153	2,854
Shridharmi	29,119	29,117	2
Brahmo	641	nil	641

Hinduism, as is evident from the above table, is the religious faith of an overwhelming majority accounting for 93.7% of the district population. Next in importance is Islam with 4.4% of the population of the district in its fold. The persons who returned Shridharma and Brahmoism as their religions together constitute only 1.8% of the population. Christians belonging to all sects come up to only 0.12% and Jains and Buddhists form negligible minorities.

The following table gives an idea about the religionwise distribution of the people of the district over the last 60 years.

RELIGIONWISE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1901-1961

(Figures in brackets indicate percentages of the total population)

Year of Census count	District population	Animists, believers in tribal religions & others	Christians	Hindus	Muslims
1901	11,16,411	89,160 (8%)	363 (0.03%)	9,75,746 (87.4%)	51,114 (4.6%)
1931	11,11,721	47,387 (4.3%)	1,645 (0.14%)	10,11,654 (91%)	51,012 (4.6%)
1961	16,64,513	29,760 (1.8%)	2,090 (0.12%)	15,59,399 (93.7%)	73,007 (4.4%)

The preceding figures indicate a steady rise in the percentage of Hindus in the district. In the 30-year period from 1901 to 1931, 3.5% of the total population changed their faiths and came within the fold of Hinduism and in the next 30 years another 2.71% of the total population got admittance into Hindu society. The percentage of Muslims has remained more or less constant in the 60-year

period under review. Christians registered a slight rise from 0.03% to 0.12% during the same period. It is thus natural to presume that conversions[1] to Hinduism were not from either of these religious groups. In 1901, people described as Animists accounted for·8% of the total population. In 1931, 4.3% of the total population was described as believers in tribal religions, meaning almost the same thing. In 1961, only 1.8% of the total population was declared as professing 'other religions'.[2] It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that persons and groups having faith in tribal religions and/or Animism were the fresh entrants into the fold of Hinduism.

From times immemorial the process of integration (as distinguished from conversion) into Hindu society of indigenous religious groups through multifarious cultural and social contacts with their Hindu neighbours has come to be reckoned as a salient feature of Hinduism. It must be added, however, that the absorption of persons of the fringe-groups within the Hindu society has seldom been a complete one; nor could it be. A former fringe-group was supposed to retain its identity and relative exclusiveness, like any other caste-group within the Hindu society, due to the operation of the caste system. An admitted group is wont to be given a position in the caste hierarchy and its social distance with other caste-groups fixed with the operation of certain practices of commensality and contacts. It is also a common practice with the ethnic groups with religions other than Hinduism to retain a great many of their former cults, beliefs and rituals, though in vastly changed forms, even while they consider themselves to be within the fold of Hindu society. In Bankura district this process of absorption of communities with religions variously described as Animism, Shamanism, tribal religion etc. can be observed to have begun from the 5th century B.C. (see Chapter II on Ancient History; section dealing with the advent of Aryan Jainism) due to the peculiar geographical and communicative factors of the land housing relatively isolated ethnic groups.[3] Tribals in the district show a very slow advance from exclusiveness towards integration with the major trend of the 'great culture'[4] in this area, namely the Bengali-Hindu-Peasant culture.

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[1] According to traditional practice, there can be no conversion to Hinduism. One is either born a Hindu or not. The *Ārya Samāj* movement, however, introduced the practice of conversion. But neither the movement nor the Samāj ever gained any ground in the district.

[2] Those who declared Brahmoism as their religion have also been included in this category. We can, for the present, leave them aside. By doing so, the actual percentage of the former animists and people of 'other religions' suffers a further decrease.

[3] Surajit Sinha—'Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continua in Central India', in *Man in India*, Vol. 45, No. I, January-March 1965. pp. 61-64.

[4] Robert Redfield—The Social Organization of Tradition in Peasant Society and Culture: an Anthropological Approach to Civilization. Chicago, 1956. pp. [illegible]

Religious integration

The religious integration of these 'little communities'[1] with the 'great culture' stream of Hinduism finds expression in the following forms observable jointly or severally: (a) a divinity of the Hindu pantheon begins to be worshipped by hitherto alien ethnic groups, (b) a divinity of a hitherto alien group gets acceptance into the Hindu pantheon by being worshipped by groups within the Hindu fold, (c) a divinity of the pantheon of an alien group gets conceptually fused with a divinity of the Hindu pantheon through a metamorphosis of both the concepts of divinity and (d) ritual services of Hindu temples and/or priests are extended to hitherto alien ethnic groups.

The religion of the Bhumijs

According to the Census of 1931, all the ethnical Bhumijs of the district returned Hinduism as their religion. Yet these Hinduized offshoots of the Mundas of Ranchi[2] share a large number of the religious cults, beliefs and rituals of the parent group. They simultaneously profess many of the cults, beliefs and practices of their more established Hindu neighbours. The religious integration of the Bhumijs with the Hindu society varies "within certain limits, according to the social position and territorial status of the individuals concerned. Zemindars and well-to-do tenure-holders employ Brahmins as their family priests and offer sacrifices to Kali (and especially to Siva in Bankura—Ed.). The mass of the people revere the sun under the name of Sing-Bonga and Dharam as the giver of harvest to men and the cause of changes of seasons affecting their agricultural fortune."[3] *Dharam deotā* is invoked at the beginning of every village festival and is conceived by the Bhumij as the presiding deity of all moral actions.[4] *Dharma*, as propitiated by the neighbouring Hindu populace, especially by the so-called lower castes, is really a form of sun-worship mixed up with some of the local cults. It is difficult to say which concept of the sun-god—the Bhumij *Dharam deotā* or the *Dharma* cult of the Rāḍh country—originated first.

Among the other deities of the Bhumijs mention may be made of (a) *Jāhir-Buru*, whom they worship with offerings of goats, fowls, rice and *ghi* (clarified butter) at the *Sārhul* festival. Some of the older religious observances, like the *Sārhul*, which have attained derogatory connotation in the eyes of the Hindu neighbours, are nowadays performed in partial or complete secrecy from outsiders.[5] The lāyā or the traditional Bhumij priest presides over the ceremony. *Jāhir-Buru's* worship is a necessary preliminary to the commencement of agricultural operations. (b) *Kārākāṭā*

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[1] loc. cit.

[2] E. T. Dalton—Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. Calcutta, 1872, pp. 162-70.

[3] H. H. Risley—The Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1891. p. 124.

[4] Surajit Sinha—'Changes in the Cycle of Festivals in a Bhumij Village' in Journal of Social Research, Vol. I, No. 1, September 1958. Ranchi. p. 44.

[5] loc. cit.

is another agricultural deity worshipped for rains—the divine services being performed by traditional Bhumij priests. (c) Various *Grām-deotās* or village deities having no anthropomorphic forms and which are mere pieces of stone usually placed under a tree in the centre of a village, either in the open or inside a simple hut, are alternately identified with an original tribal divinity or a Hindu deity. When worshipped as an original tribal god, a lāyā priest presides over the function and only the Bhumijs may participate. When worshipped as a Hindu divinity, the Brahmin priest officiates and the ceremony is attended also by people of other Hindu castes.[1] (d) *Mārāṅg-Buru*, the mountain deity, was once a prominent god of the Bhumijs. It seems that its former importance has diminished over the years. But in 1956-57, Surajit Sinha noticed cases where *Mārāṅg-Buru* was worshipped by wealthy tenure-holders and local zemindars belonging to the Bhumij community. The general body of Hindus is, however, inclined to regard *Mārāṅg-Buru* and his wife *Chuprangi* as equivalent in status to any other important Hindu deity.[2] (e) *Pañch-Bāhini* and *Baradelā* are local divinities worshipped by the Bankura Bhumijs in much the same fashion as *Jāhir-Buru*, the chief difference being that the offerings to *Pañch-Bāhini* are usually goats and a kind of incense called *māthāghashā* while only fowls are presented to *Baradelā*.[3] The traditional Bhumij festivals have also undergone changes and have become more Hinduized. The *Karam-parab* relating to the worship of the Karam tree in August-September has long been one of the principal festivals of the Bhumijs. *Karam-deotā* used to be worshipped traditionally for the fertility of crops and women. With the adoption of the Bengali language by the Bhumijs, the divinity has undergone linguistic transformation to *Karma* and has attained the supplementary connotation of purity in an ethical aura stemming from the Hindu concept of *Karma*.[4] In the same way, *Ind-parab* has now become the worship of the Hindu deity Indra. *Chhātā-parab* has also become Hinduized. *Chait-parab*, held in the month of April, has been transformed into the worship of Siva in accompaniment with the performance of hook-swinging. Bhumijs have also taken to widespread worship of the serpent deity Manasā.[5]

"Besides the obvious factor of large-scale immigration of various Hindu castes into the Bhumij territories, bringing in their own patterns of festivals . . . the most important organisational basis of the transformation in the pattern of festivals has been the factor of the formation of feudalised states among the Bhumij in . . . the Manbhum-Barabhum areas since several centuries before the British

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[1] Ibid. p. 48.
[2] Ibid. p. 46.
[3] H. H. Risley—op. cit. p. 124.
[4] Surajit Sinha—op. cit. p. 44.
[5] For a detailed discussion of the Manasā cult, see Appendix A of this chapter.

occupation of Barabhum in 1765. The majority of the larger Hinduised festivals in the area as sponsored by the Bhumijs are derived from pseudo-Kshatriya feudal super-chiefs, Tarafsardars, Zemindars etc."[1]

The religion of the Santals

In the Census of 1931, 47,491 Santals, out of a total of 1,14,577 living in the district, declared Hinduism as their religious faith. The drift must have continued unabated for in the 1961 Census there is no record of any one returning religions other than Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Shridharma and Brahmoism. Even if we concede the fact that a sizable proportion of the 29,111 persons regarding Shridharma as their religion are Santals, it appears to be an instance of Hinduization by proxy inasmuch as this splinter faith practically conforms to certain tenets of the Hindu *bhakti* cult.

The Santals believe that the universe was created by 'Ṭhākur', the Supreme Being. Risley doubts whether the Hindu name 'Ṭhākur' can form a part of the original religious system of the Santals and the privilege attributed to him of exercising supreme powers leads Risley to associate the deity with a latter stage of the Santals' theological development when they freely borrowed ideas from the neighbouring Hindus.[2] Some Santals living close to the Hindus identify their Supreme Being with one 'Dhorom'. The educated Santals living under Hindu influence are seen to equate their Supreme Being with Hindu ideas in the Upanishads. There are others who identify the traditional 'Ṭhākur Jiu' with Siṅg-Bongā, the sun-god, which is worshipped every tenth year by the Santals.[3] The fact, however, remains that the Santals of modern times regard their Supreme Being as too good and passive a deity to interfere with the affairs of mortals and as such 'Ṭhākur' or 'Ṭhākur Jiu' is seldom found to be worshipped on a large scale.

The Santals have several village spirits whom they worship during all public festivals, each of them being supposed to preside over particular rural areas in which they live. The chief among them is *Mārāṅg-Buru* (the great mountain) who is a powerful god with command both over good and evil. He should be propitiated with liberal offerings of rice-beer and *mahuā* liquor during all Santal festivals. Another deity of the same order is *Moren-Ko* (literally, five brothers), two of whose sisters—*Jāher-Erā* and *Gosāe-Erā*—are formidable deities themselves. *Jāher-Erā*, the goddess of the sacred grove, is worshipped at the *Jāher-thān* in every Santal village. She has a stone assigned as her symbol. The Santals worship her for the general welfare of the village for which a brown hen and a red she-goat are sacrificed. *Parganā-Boṅgā* is the chief of the spirits of a particular

[1] ibid. pp. 24-29.
[2] H. H. Risley—op. cit. Vol. II. Calcutta, 1891. p. 232.
[3] Charulal Mukherjea—The Santals. Calcutta, undated. pp. 273-74.

pargana, which keeps malevolent spirits out of it and is also regarded as the master of witches. *Mānjhi Boṅgā* may be supposed to represent the spirits of the dead Mānjhis (village headmen) and he is second in authority to *Parganā Boṅgā*.[1] Apart from these principal deities, there are some minor divinities as well. Each Santal family has two special gods of its own—the *Orāk-Boṅgā* or the household god and the *Ābge-Boṅgā* or the sacred god. There are besides several godlings not worthy of detailed description.

"The pantheon of Bongas is elastic enough to include within its fold some Hindu deities."[2] Thus, in a mixed village in Chhatna police station a rural deity is worshipped by the Hindu castes as *Dharma Ṭhākur* when Dom priests officiate but the same deity, when worshipped by the Santals, retains its name Dharma but is inevitably assimilated in their own *Boṅgā* pantheon and the worship is presided over by a Santal priest of the Murmu clan. *Sohrāe*, the harvest festival of the Santals, is celebrated almost at the same time as the Kāli puja of the Hindus and, as such, in places where the Santals live in close neighbourly relation with Hindus, this festival is regarded as an extension of the Hindu Kāli puja. With this new association, some of the old rituals connected with the festival like *Hāko-Kāṭkom* or catching fish and crabs and *Jāle*, the greetings ceremony, have been dropped.[3] Santals living in hamlets adjoining Hindu villages are found nowadays to go round the places of Durgā worship in festive dress.

One cannot be sure as to when the Santal festivals began to be associated with their Hindu counterparts. "But as one looks to *Pata*, the Santal version of Hindu *Charak* (hook-swinging festival), it seems to be pretty old."[4] In the traditional judicial system of the Santals, this festival plays an important part. The final trial of an offender takes place on the *Pātā Chāndo* or the month of worship of Mahādeo.[5] Hook-swinging penance voluntarily undertaken by special devotees called *Bhaktyās* is an essential part of the celebration of *Pātā*. How closely it resembles the religious practices of the low-caste Hindus !

The religion of the Deswāli Mānjhis

Tribals known as Deswāli Mānjhis are those Santals who, before the current tendency among Santals to embrace Hinduism, came within the Hindu fold. According to H. H. Risley, "Deswali Manjhis are a sub-tribe of Santals in the south of Manbhoom, who employ Brahmans (for officiating in religious observances) and have adopted portions of Hindu rituals."[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 276.
[2] Nabendu Dutta-Majumdar—Santals: A Study in Culture Change. New Delhi, 1956. p. 100.
[3] Charulal Mukherjea—The Santals. Calcutta, undated. p. 252.
[4] Ibid. p. 266.
[5] loc. cit.
[6] H. H. Risley—The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. I. Calcutta. 1891. p. 217.

The Deswāli Mānjhis are nowadays trying to avoid eating beef, pork, snakes and frogs and shape their habits according to the norms set by their Hindu neighbours. Caste Hindu Brahmin priests (belonging to Deoghariyā *Sreni*) perform only the sraddha ceremony of the Deswāli Mānjhis according to *Smriti* rites. In all other festivals, the village priest or the lāyā, performs the sacred rites. Among their festivals, *Āshāḍhi* puja (held in June-July) is performed by the whole community for bumper crops. White goats and fowls etc. are sacrificed on agricultural fields on this occasion. In *Srāban* (July-August), individual family heads perform Manasā-puja to propitiate the snake goddess. In *Kārttik* (October-November) *Bā̃dhnā-parab* is performed in each household for the welfare of the domestic animals. In *Paush* (December-January), *Tusu* puja is performed throughout the month with accompaniment of *Tusu* songs. A ritual called *Dharam* puja is performed on every fifth or tenth year as the family customs demand by each family head for the smooth continuation of the family line. *Dharam* is propitiated by sacrificing white goats in agricultural fields and the puja is generally performed in the month of *Māgh* (January-February).

At present some sort of puritanistic movement is going on in this area, aiming at more conformation to Hinduized religious behaviour. The people who have taken to this new ideology are known as *Surya-pujāris* or the sun-worshippers. These people generally wear reddish clothes and utter fixed incantations (*mantras*) when the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. They generally finish their evening meals before the sun sets. This movement in Bankura district has been started by a sannyasi known as Kripā Sindhu Abadhut of the village Tilāboni in P.S. Khatra and it has gained some ground among the Deshwāli Mānjhis of Ranibandh, Khatra, Raipur and Saltora police stations.[1]

The religion of the Korās

Bankura has the third largest population of Korās among all the districts of West Bengal. People belonging to this Scheduled Tribe are mainly concentrated in the thanas of Khatra, Saltora, Ranibandh and Raipur. Although they are still regarded as Ādivāsis, the Korās of Bankura are found to worship *Mahādeo* or Siva. Many Korā hamlets have special *Mahādeo-thāns* but if there are Siva temples near by, they visit them for regular worship. Korās are also attracted by the Rādhā-Krishna cult and Durgā-Kāli representations of the Hindu *Sakti* cult. Every Korā settlement has besides a *Gerām-devatā* installed on a *Gerām-thān*. Usually de-classed Brahmins of the Deoghariyā sect act as their priests. In some areas near forests where the Korās live in relative isolation from other tribes and castes, they still have their annual ceremonial hunt during the month of *Baisākh* (April-May) which is now no more

[1] Amal Kumar Das—The Koras and Some Little Known Communities of West Bengal. Calcutta, 1964. pp. 85-96.

than a ritual reminiscent of a long lost practice. Korās call this hunt *Bir-sendrā* and they join the neighbouring Santals on such expeditions. But unlike the Santals, Korā women do not participate in them.[1]

The religion of the Bauris

The Bauris and Bagdis—the two most important depressed caste communities in the district—have long been accepted into the fold of Hindu society but they still retain many religious practices closely resembling those of the Ādivāsis rather than of the upper caste Hindus.

Of all the Scheduled Caste communities living in Bankura, the Bauris are the most numerous. Speaking of them in 1935, B. N. Dutta remarked, "they call themselves Hindus, but they remain outside the pale of the Hindu society. Members of good Hindu castes do not touch water carried by them."[2] According to H. H. Risley, "in Western Bengal, the connexion of the Bauris with Hinduism is of the slenderest kind and their favourite objects of worship are Manasa, Bhadu, Mansingh, Barpahari, Dharmaraj and Kudrasini."[3] The community, once living on the fringe of Hindu society, has, however, moved closer to the main stream of the population over the years. The Manasā cult—a connecting link—has been described in details in Appendix A at the end of this chapter. *Bhādu* or *Bhadreswari*, also worshipped by the Bagdis of the Rāḍh country, was—so the legend goes—the daughter of one Raja Nilmoni Singha Dev Sharma of Panchet. On the day of her marriage the groom failed to arrive as he was killed on the way by dacoits. *Bhādu* would not marry any other suitable groom as she had already spiritually offered herself to the man who was now dead. She ascended the funeral pyre of her prospective husband and perished in flames. Since then people have been worshipping her with songs and dances in which men, women and children take part on the last day of *Bhādra* (middle of September). Legend apart, the festival seems to be connected with fertility rites in which virgin worship forms an important part. Among other divinities worshipped by the Bauris, *Mānsingh*, a male deity, and *Kudrasini*, a female principle, are credited with powers of doing evil to mortals. They are worshipped with offerings of goats and fowls. *Barapāhāri* is merely another name for the 'great mountain'—*Mārāṅg-Buru* of the Santals.[4] *Dharma* and Manasā—the festival of the former having close affinities with the worship of Siva and the latter definitely belonging to the Hindu pantheon of these days—are two divinities, very widely worshipped by the Bauris of Bankura district. In most of the *thāns*

[1] loc. cit.

[2] B. N. Dutta—'Ethnological Notes on some of the Castes of Bengal', in Man in India, Vol. XV, 1935.

[3] H. H. Risley—The Tribes and Castes of Bengal : Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1891. p. 80.

[4] loc. cit.

of Bauri villages either of the two is the usual deity. The Bauris worship them with offerings of clay models of horses. So far as the worship of *Bhādu*, *Mānsingh*, *Barapāhāri* and occasionally of *Kudrasini* is concerned, the religious functions are conducted by a priest called *Parāmānik* or *Parānik*. In worshipping *Dharmarāj* and *Kudrasini*, de-classed Brahmins are employed rarely as in most cases Bauris do not employ Brahmin priests nor would the latter wish to officiate for them. No priests and no incantations are required for the marriage ceremonies of the Bauris although Bauri girls customarily go to the house of a Brahmin to fetch water which is sprinkled on the heads of the marrying couple. Marriage days are also settled according to the Hindu calendar. Bauris of Bankura take part *en masse* in the Hindu *Chaḍak* (hook-swinging) festival when they volunteer to undergo various kinds of physical torture enjoined by long standing practices.

The religion of the Bagdis

The religion of the Bagdis, the second numerous Scheduled Caste in the district, conforms more closely to orthodox tenets of Hinduism than that of the Bauris although it is not free from surviving traits of animism and nature-worship common among other tribes and castes of western Bengal. "Siva, Vishnu, Dharmaraj (Yama), Durga, the Saktis and the myriad names of the modern Hindu Pantheon, are worshipped in a more or less intelligent fashion under the guidance of the degraded (*patit*) Brahmans who look after the spiritual welfare of the lower castes. Alongside of these greater gods we find the Santali goddess Gosain Era and Barpahar, 'the great mountain' god (Marang Buru) of the same tribe. According to the Bagdis themselves, their favourite and characteristic deity is Manasa, the sister of snake-king Vasuki, the wife of Jaratkaru and mother of Astika, whose intervention saved the snake race from destruction by Janamejaya. Manasa is worshipped by the caste with great pomp and circumstance."[1] The worship of Manasa usually takes place between the middle of June and middle of October when rice, sweetmeats and he-goats are offered to her. On the last day of *Bhādra* (middle of September), the Bagdis of Bankura carry in procession the effigy of a female saint named *Bhādu* whose worship has already been described before.[2] The sraddha ceremony is performed a month after the death of a person under the supervision of a Brahman and generally conforms to corresponding Hindu rituals.

Cross-cultural fertilization: worship of *Dharma*, Manasā, Siva and Chandikā

In the preceding discussion on the religious cults, beliefs and rituals of some of the important tribes and castes of Bankura, we have seen how they are gradually being absorbed into the ample folds of the Hindu society without forsaking, for the time being, their many traditional faiths and practices. We have also seen how they are

[1] ibid. p. 41.
[2] loc. cit.

taking to the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses through methods which are not particularly orthodox. This process of cross-cultural fertilization has stamped the Hinduism of the area with a special regional character. The principal cults of *Dharma* and Manasā having a very strong sway in this region combine in themselves important elements of the religious beliefs and practices of the Ādivāsis as also of the Hindu society which have been analysed in Appendix A to this chapter. The other major popular cults of Bankura are those of Siva and Chandikā.

Siva worship of the Rāḍh region of West Bengal of which Bankura forms a part, has a definite folk character which defies an orthodox textual description of the same. As a recent researcher has shown, the local cult of Siva, like the parallel cults of *Dharma* and Manasā stems from a cross-cultural fertilization of Hindu and non-Hindu beliefs and practices.[1] The Siva venerated in the Rāḍh country is neither the Vedic 'Rudra' nor the destroyer of the Purānas but is a fertility deity whose phallic symbol upholds the idea of his being the supreme creator. The principal celebration connected with Siva worship is the Gājan or Chaḍak festival held towards the end of *Chaitra* (middle of April) on a very wide scale in Bankura district. The connected rituals, especially the self-inflicted physical mortifications of the devotees, are strongly reminiscent of pre-Hindu tribal practices. In this connexion it is interesting to note that people of the so called lower castes—Doms, Bagdis, Bauris, Bhumijs etc. —constitute an overwhelming majority of the worshippers who voluntarily suffer such gruesome corporal penances.

Chandikā Devi or Chandi, regarded as being one of the 'Saktis', held her sway in this part of the country when the Sakti-cult used to be the religious order of the day. According to Asutosh Bhattacharyya, the name of Chandi does not occur in ancient religious texts like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata or the earlier Purānas. From her mention in the later Purānas, such as the Mārkandeya Purāna and the Devi Bhāgavata, he comes to the conclusion that this divinity entered the Hindu pantheon from non-Aryan sources. Orāons of Choṭanāgpur worship a female principle called Chandi and her functions in the tribal religious world are similar to those performed by the Sakti deities in the Hindu pantheon.[2] In the Rāḍh region, the most popular legend about Chandikā is spun round a low-caste hunter named Kālketu which tends to confirm the belief held by Asutosh Bhattacharyya and other modern researchers.

Before their conversion to the Gauḍiya Vaishnava Bhakti cult, Mrinmayee—which is but another name of Chandikā Devi—used

[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. pp. 53-60.

[2] Asutosh Bhattacharyya—*Bānglā Mangal Kāvyer Itihās*. Calcutta, 1958. p. [illegible].

to be the family deity of the Vishnupur royal house. In the 'Chandi' portion of the Mārkandeya Purāna, Chandikā Devi has also been referred to as Ambikā. At Ambikanagar in Ranibandh police station, the temple of Ambikā attracts pilgrims from far and near. She is apparently a goddess of Jain origin although her present worship is conducted in the Hindu manner. There is another Ambikā in the village of Shāhārjorā in P.S. Barjora. Here the present temple may be a recent one, but legends connected with the deity amply testify to a very old tradition.

The Gauḍiya Vaishnava Bhakti cult

The most significant component of Hinduism which, to a large extent, shaped the cultural history of the district from the beginning of the 17th century onwards has been the Gauḍiya Vaishnava Bhakti cult. The advent of this new religious faith in the Bankura region under the aegis of the Malla kings of Vishnupur has been dealt with in Chapter II. Being the religion of the rulers of the land, Rādhā-Krishna worship spread fast among their subjects. It should, however, be pointed out that Vaishnavism in the form of Vishnu or Nārāyana worship was not unknown in Bankura before. As far back as the fourth century A.D. we find an example of Vishnu (Chakraswāmi) worship in Bankura from an inscription on the wall of a cave in the Susunia hill. There is also dependable evidence to prove that the Vaishnava text Bhāgavata used to be recited regularly in the Malla court prior to the conversion of Bir Hambir to Chaitanya-Vaishnavism. Among the upper-caste Hindus as well as the Bagdis of Vishnupur subdivision, the Gauḍiya Vaishnava Bhakti cult has taken a very deep root. Festivals like *Rās* and *Doljātrā*, particularly in Vishnupur subdivision, are now invariably associated with elaborate worship of Rādhā and Krishna.

Hinduism, as it is professed today in the Bankura district, exhibits three distinct currents, so to say, which are not in conflict but in smooth understanding with one another. The first stream is represented by non-Aryan cults of *Mārāṅg-Buru*, *Siṅg Boṅgā*, *Gosāe Erā*, *Barpāhār*, *Kudrasini*, *Bhādu* etc. worshipped by the Ādivāsis. In the second stream are to be found cults resulting from cross-cultural fertilization between Aryan and non-Aryan faiths and embodied in the worship of Dharmarāj, Siva, Manasā and Chandi. Numerically speaking, these deities enjoy the widest popularity in Bankura district. The third stream is represented by gods and goddesses of the orthodox Hindu pantheon like Vishnu, Krishna, Rādhikā, Durgā, Lakshmi etc. For more than 350 years since the day when the Malla king Bir Hambir was converted to Gauḍiya Vaishnavism by Shrinibas Acharyya, the high-caste Hindus of Bankura have been largely following the Bhakti cult. Yet it is doubtful whether this faith has succeeded in mitigating the influence exercised by the other cults. On the south and the south-west of the district, non-Aryan gods and goddesses are still worshipped in full glory. Even in Vishnupur

subdivision, Siva, Dharmarāj and Manasā attract innumerable worshippers.[1]

Shridharma: a new religious movement

The new religious movement known as Shridharma draws its adherents from the tribals of the district and, as such, is pre-eminently rural in character. Only two among the 15,303 persons who returned Shridharma as their religion during the Census of 1961, are residents of urban areas. Most of the followers of this creed are Santals, though believers also include persons from such other communities as the Koras, Khairas, Lohars, Maghaiya Doms and Bauris. The movement is a more broad-based successor of the Kherwār movement[2] among the Santals. Like its predecessor, the Shridharma movement is accelerating the tendencies of acculturation with Bengali Hindu peasant culture and trying at the same time for the preservation of tribal identity. It is basically a puritanistic movement with religious ideas and concepts borrowed from the Gauḍiya Vaishnava Bhakti cult. Believers are urged to refrain from liquors, beef, pork and such other edibles disliked by the Bengali Hindus. Propagation of glorified myths about their ancestry with emphasis on identifying their forefathers with respectable people described in Hindu mythology is an important element of the religion.

Jainism and Buddhism

The advent, growth, decline and eventual absorption of Jainism by the Brahminical religion in Bankura district has been adequately described in Chapter II. The impact of Buddhism on the people of Bankura has also received fair attention in the same chapter.

Islam

The Muslims of Bankura district are mainly concentrated in the thanas of Indas, Kotulpur, Patrasayer, Sonamukhi and Joypur in Vishnupur subdivision. In the Sadar subdivision Muslims are found in considerable strength in Onda, Ranibandh and Barjora police stations. Most of them belong to the Sunni sect of the Hānāfi School and the majority are believed to be descendants of local converts. Almost 90 per cent of the Muslims are Sheikhs and the rest are Saiyads. There is none of Mughal stock while there may be a few descendants of Pathans here and there.

"The veneration of Pirs or saints is common among the local Muhammadans, who frequent their shrines and make offerings of sweetmeats, in order that the Pirs may look with favour upon them and grant them the fulfilment of their desires. It is reported that many Hindus have the same belief in the supernatural powers of Pirs, and also make offerings at their shrines."[3] (In many of the dargās sacred to Muslim Pirs and Fakirs, Hindu devotees make offerings of clay horses even to this day.—Ed.). The most well known of such places of worship is the tomb of Shah Ismail Ghazi

[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. p. 64.
[2] Nabendu Datta-Majumder—The Santals : A Study in Culture-Change. Delhi, 1956, pp. 61-62.
[3] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. pp. [illegible]

at the village of Lokpur in Joypur police station. (See entry on Lokpur in the chapter on Places of Interest). In the Indas police station there are as many as eight shrines of Pirs held in high popular esteem. These are of Shāh Mādār in the village of Rol, Bandegi Shāh Mustāphā in the village of Chinchiṅgā and Saiyed Muhammad Husain and Shāh Kabir in the village of Kariśunda. In a field south of the village of Hāyātnagar in the same police station there is a shrine of Satya Pir whose cult is the resultant of a cross-cultural fertilization between the mediaeval Hindu Bhakti cult and the popular Muslim religion of Bengal. Buḍā Pir of Chak Sukur, in the same thana, is another local divinity venerated by Hindus and Muslims alike. Shah Ismail Ghazi, referred to above, is also revered at a shrine at Pātharchaṭi in Kotulpur police station. The memory and legend of the last-named Pir seems to wield a very great influence on the people of the adjacent district of Hooghly as well. At Pirpuskarani-Fakirberā, in Gangajalghati police station, another Pir holds great sway over the local people. In Vishnupur town there is a shrine of a Pir called Shah Kaubān Āli. The Muslims of Bankura town celebrate the Id and Muharram festivals with due *éclat*.

Christianity

According to the 1961 Census, 2,058 of the 2,090 Christians of the district live in Sadar subdivision and only 32 live in Vishnupur subdivision. 2,019 Christians, representing 96 per cent of the total Christian population of the district, live within the Raipur, Ranibandh and Bankura police stations. In Raipur thana which, of all the police stations in the district, has the largest Christian population of 870 persons, they concentrate in and around Sarenga where there is a centre of the Methodist Church. (For a detailed description of the Methodist Church and its predecessor the Wesleyan Mission, the chapters on Places of Interest and Public Life & Social Service Organizations may be seen). In point of numbers Ranibandh thana comes next with 394 Christians and Bankura thana follows with 355 of whom 26 reside in rural areas and the rest in Bankura town.

The data provided by the 1931 Census would permit a tentative conclusion that in Bankura the Ādivāsis show no marked preference for embracing Christianity. On the contrary, the tendency among them to come within the Hindu fold is far more strong despite a century of social welfare work carried on in their midst by dedicated Christian missionaries. According to the 1931 Census, Christian Santals accounted for only 0.42 per cent of the total number of Santals and only 3.21 per cent of the total number of Indian Christians in the district. It is, however, claimed by workers of the Methodist Mission at Sarenga that a large majority of the Christians in Raipur and Ranibandh thanas are Santals with a fair sprinkling of Koras, Khairas, Lohars and Oraons. Cases are not rare where people belonging to the Utkal Brahmin and Tili (a trading caste belonging

to the *Nabasākha sreni*) castes have embraced Christianity. If they are not strictly endogamous, they at least show a preference for endogamous marriages and try to avoid entering into marital relations with those belonging to the *jal-achal* castes in Hindu society. Santal Christians seldom observe the traditional Santal religious rites nowadays but they enthusiastically participate in important and popular Santal festivals along with their non-Christian brethren.

Most of the Indian Christians of the district have been converted to the new faith by the Methodist Church and, as such, belong to the Anglican school. From 1870 onwards, the Wesleyan Mission has been at work in the district spreading education and Christianity and rendering social service. The work has now been taken over by the Methodist Church. (For a detailed account of the activities and organizations of Christian missionaries in the district, the chapters on Public Land & Social Service Organizations and Places of Interest may be seen).

Tribes and Castes

The following tables would indicate in a compact manner the thanawise distribution of the major Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in the district as on March 31, 1961.

THANAWISE DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR SCHEDULED TRIBES IN BANKURA DISTRICT

(According to the Census of 1961)

Police Station	R=Rural U=Urban	Santal	Kora or Mudikora	Bhumij
Bankura	R	3,886	—	24
	U	239	156	7
Khatra	R	17,841	2,423	2,821
	U	71	37	58
Vishnupur	R	5,028	13	5
	U	73	—	—
Sonamukhi	R	2,866	30	—
	U	129	—	—
Patrasayer	R	1,897	21	6
	U	—	—	—
Onda	R	5,243	—	—
	U	—	—	—
Chhatna	R	22,024	701	157
	U	—	—	—
Gangajalghati	R	3,097	—	—
	U	—	—	—
Barjora	R	1,311	26	—
	U	—	—	—
Mejia	R	529	40	—
	U	—	—	—

THANAWISE DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR SCHEDULED TRIBES IN BANKURA DISTRICT—*(contd.)*

Police Station	R=Rural U=Urban	Santal	Kora or Mudikora	Bhumij
Saltora	R	*11,309*	*1,356*	—
	U	—	—	—
Indpur	R	3,897	692	288
	U	—	—	—
Ranibandh	R	21,563	1,265	2,806
	U	—	—	—
Raipur	R	29,251	1,112	1,205
	U	—	—	—
Simlapal	R	8,811	6	—
	U	—	—	—
Taldangra	R	8,461	124	145
	U	—	—	—
Joypur	R	1,194	31	22
	U	—	—	—
Kotulpur	R	1,738	21	151
	U	—	—	—
Indas	R	1,036	68	—
	U	—	—	—
BANKURA DISTRICT	R	1,51,742	7,929	7,630
	U	512	193	65
BANKURA DISTRICT	Total	1,52,254	8,122	7,695

THANAWISE DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR SCHEDULED CASTES IN BANKURA DISTRICT

(According to the Census of 1961)

Police Station	R=Rural U=Urban	Bauri	Bagdi, Duley, Byagra-Kshatriya, Let or Matia	Khaira or Layak	Lohar	Sunri excluding Saha
Bankura	R	17,097	2,623	4,122	1,293	5,757
	U	4,415	1,401	28	1,085	126
Khatra	R	12,154	1,036	500	1,347	3,658
	U	337	53	11	35	29
Vishnupur	R	4,016	3,965	4,056	3,442	497
	U	1,346	328	59	940	200
Sonamukhi	R	6,162	7,537	4,574	1,469	491
	U	1,110	429	193	103	147
Patrasayer	R	3,461	19,489	391	3,032	611
	U	274	507	—	15	—
Onda	R	8,963	5,104	6,086	3,421	1,371
	U	—	—	—	—	—

THANAWISE DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR SCHEDULED CASTES IN BANKURA DISTRICT—*(contd.)*

Police Station	R=Rural U=Urban	Bauri	Bagdi, Duley, Byagra-Kshatriya, Let or Matia	Khaira or Layak	Lohar	Sunri excluding Saha
Chhatna	R	13,141	1,289	1,377	912	3,642
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Gangajalghati	R	16,042	639	1,656	2,346	5,782
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Barjora	R	10,076	5,790	1,982	1,255	2,093
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Mejia	R	6,101	1,377	1,948	415	1,105
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Saltora	R	11,829	1,964	588	16	4,764
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Indpur	R	15,669	562	405	589	6,512
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Ranibandh	R	1,599	681	421	81	1,368
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Raipur	R	7,846	791	1,124	6,222	3,240
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Simlapal	R	3,402	595	1,741	5,087	686
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Taldangra	R	5,216	532	4,086	2,723	836
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Joypur	R	1,870	7,329	3,349	3,202	37
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Kotulpur	R	371	10,829	—	13	34
	U	—	—	—	—	—
Indas	R	147	18,626	113	26	161
	U	—	—	—	—	—
BANKURA DISTRICT	R	1,45,162	90,758	38,848	36,891	42,645
	U	7,582	2,718	291	2,178	502
BANKURA DISTRICT	Total	1,52,744	93,476	39,139	39,069	43,147

The Santals

Numerically, the Santals constitute the largest single ethnic group in the district. According to the Census of 1961, they numbered 1,62,255 and accounted for 9 per cent of the total population of the district. 19.2 per cent of the total Santal population of the district live in Raipur, 14.4 per cent in Chhatna, 14.2 per cent in Ranibandh, 11.7 per cent in Khatra, 7.4 per cent in Saltora, 5.7 per cent in

Simlapal and 5.5 per cent in Taldangra police stations of the district. It can be easily seen that their concentration is the heaviest in these thanas of the Sadar subdivision. In Vishnupur subdivision, the largest concentration—3.3 per cent of the district total—is in Vishnupur thana itself. It may thus be broadly stated that the Santals of Bankura are found mainly in the south and south-west of the district.

Both from Santal mythology relating to the origin of the tribe as also from historical records about their migration, it seems that the Santals are not autochthones of the district and that their settlement there cannot go back beyond the last quarter of the 18th century.[1] But McAlpin[2] thinks that "Sonthal occupation is old; how old it is impossible to say. Chhatna of the paragana of Samantabhum (called by the Sonthals 'Santbhum'), in the north-west, named after a 'Samanta' or General of the Emperor of Delhi, who is said to have subdued the original Raja, is recognized by the Sonthals of the south as having an almost equal claim to that of Sikherbhum, which is conterminous with it, to be regarded as their original home in comparatively recent times. South of Chhatna and in the north of Indpore, the Sonthal population is less dense, but further south it becomes denser and denser till it reaches its maximum in Raipur. The Sonthals cannot account for the deficiency in the middle area, but enquiry elicited the fact that the ancestors of the village of Rangibari, one of the largest and one of the parent villages of a number of other villages in Khatra thana, did not come straight south from Sikherbhum, but had emmigrated first south to Midnapore and then northward again. Rangibari they declare to be at least eight or ten generations old, that is, about three hundred years ago. On this theory the colonization of Khatra and Raipur proceeded from some central nucleus in Midnapore to which they emmigrated from Sikherbhum, meeting a minor stream flowing southwards from Chhatna. This accords with Colonel Dalton's theory that the Sonthals colonised from Saont in Midnapore.

"All this is of course conjectural. But there is a curious significance in the fact that immediately south of Raipur there is a pargana, called Silda by Dikkus (Bengali Hindus– Ed.), but by the Sonthals 'Santbhui' (really Samantabhui, having the same derivation as Samantabhum in Bankura), which is, I understand, the Saont in Midnapore, referred to by Colonel Dalton and from which the Revd. L. O. Skrefsrud derives his derivation of the word 'Sonthal' (Santals never call themselves Santals; they prefer to be known as Khervar

[1] E. T. Dalton—Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. Calcutta, 1872. pp. 208-09; H. H. Risley—The Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1891. pp. 225-26; Nabendu Datta-Majumdar—Santal: A Study in Culture-Change. Calcutta, 1956. pp. 21-32.

[2] M. C. McAlpin—Report on the condition of the Sonthals in the Districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore. Calcutta, 1909. p. 9.

or Kharwar, a variation of Ho or Hor, meaning 'man'. They also use the term Manjhi to describe themselves before an outsider.—Ed.). ...The similarity may be accidental. The Sonthal himself will not admit to it as a possible derivation. With this remarks and the hint that the word Sonthal...may be the same as Samantal, an inhabitant of the country of Samantabhum or of Samantabhui, I leave the derivation of the word. ...

"Everywhere the Aryan proper is an immigrant. The Sonthals were there before him. But it does not follow that the Sonthals, even though their ancestors cleared the jungles and made the villages, are the original inhabitants of the country. There is reason to believe that the Bhumijes were the original people, inasmuch as they were the Ghatwals or guardians of the jungle passes. In Khatra thana there is still a large Bhumij population. A few Sonthal ex-Ghatwals exist. Another semi-aboriginal caste that exists in large numbers is the Bauri, except in Raipur where he gives way to the Sonthal."

The internal structure of the Santals' social fabric is singularly complete and elaborate. They are divided into a number of exogamous clans or septs called *Pāris* according to the Santal terminology. Different authorities have given differing numbers of these septs and explanations about their origin and functions. The consensus of opinion, however, is in favour of identifying twelve septs, namely (1) Hānsdā, (2) Murmu, (3) Kisku, (4) Hembram, (5) Mārndi, (6) Soren. (7) Choḍen, (8) Ṭudu, (9) Besrā, (10) Bāske, (11) Pāuriā and (12) Bedeā. These septs or clans are again subdivided into a number of exogamous sub-septs called *Khunṭs* in Santal terminology.[1] No occupational specialization or vertical stratification characterizes these exogamous clans which are, in all probability, totemistic groups having a totem or an ancestral symbol for each of them.[2] The bond between the members of the same sept is one of kinship, or as the Santals call it, *Jāṭiā-perā* (i.e. friends of the same blood) as distinguished from *Bondhu-perā* signifying the bond between separate clans.

The Santal family is essentially patrilineal with sons inheriting the surnames of their fathers and married women adopting the surnames of their husbands. It is also a patrilocal unit as sons live in the household of their fathers and married daughters go over to the households of their husbands. Customarily, the surname of a Santal signifies the name of the clan he belongs to and this system helps to identify the kinship relations between one Santal and another.

In Santal society there is no division of labour according to septs or differences of sex. This is partly explainable by the fact that economic stratification is a recent phenomenon with them. Previously, their economy used to be co-operative and communistic and

[1] H. H. Risley—op. cit. pp. 226-29.
[2] Charulal Mukherjea—The Santals. Calcutta, undated. p. 107.

their social and political institutions, covered by the generic appellation of 'communal system' by early researchers in Santal tribal life, therefore, had their roots in the Santal economy itself. According to McAlpin, "when the parent village is overcrowded, Sonthals prospect in the jungles for fresh land to cultivate. They then find out the zamindar of the particular patch of jungle they want to clear or have cleared in anticipation of sanction, and an arrangement as to rent is made through the headman or Manjhi, who is appointed for this purpose. Thereafter all arrangements as to rent are made through this Manjhi, who is ordinarily in no way a tenure-holder, but merely the person through whom the collective rents of the villages are paid. The villagers formerly used to parcel out the lands amongst themselves into *reks* and to appoint certain village office-bearers, who each received a small amount of rent-free land, generally called *man* land," for the duties performed by them.

A brief mention may be made here of the traditional functions of the social dignitaries usually found in a Santal village. The Manjhi is the accredited headman who represents the village in all its relations with the outside world. He is assisted by the Parānik or Parāmānik. The Jog-Mānjhi is the master of ceremonies in weddings, dance-meets etc. and is also the moral censor of the village who has a Jog-Parānik or a Jog-Parāmānik as his deputy. Nāeke, the village priest, is helped by a Kudam Nāeke who performs the additional duty of warding off evil spirits by offering his own blood, scratched from his arms and mixed with rice. The village messenger or peon is called the Goḍet or the Koṭāl. All these officials are, however, not to be found in every district or in every village.

"But above the Manjhis of different villages, there is Perganait, generally the representative of the original leader of the Sonthals to any particular locality. He decides social questions and matters of caste, in consultation with different Manjhis. He is assisted by a deputy known as a Desh-Manjhi. The fines he inflicts frequently take the form of supply of rice-beer. It should be quite unnecessary to mention that the 'village communal system' is an essential part of the Sonthal national life. The Sonthal does not regard himself as a separate unit, but as a part and parcel of the village community, whose head and representative with the outside world is the Manjhi. When the landlord ceases to take his rent through the Manjhi and recognises each Sonthal as a separate raiyat, the first and most important step in the disintegration of the communal system has taken place. In all the areas under report, the existence of *mān* land, except in isolated cases, is now practically defunct. A village may, therefore, be referred to as 'intact', if the Sonthals still pay rent through the Manjhi or headman to whom a receipt is given for the total of the rents of the village. A headman's profit used to consist of his *mān* land and the rents for the excess cultivation of

waste lands. But when a village is even now intact, very little profit is, as a rule, made by the headman from the waste-lands. In a 'broken' village all the rents are paid direct to the landlords."[1]

Following his own definition, McAlpin did not find any of the 145 Santal villages within the Bankura and Chhatna police stations remaining intact in 1909. Similarly, no more than 3 of the 19 Santal villages in Gangajalghati and Saltora thanas, 8 of the 32 villages in Indpur, 20 out of the 84 villages in Khatra, 26 out of the 202 villages in Raipur, 29 out of the 84 villages in Simlapal, 29 out of the 71 villages in Taldangra and none of the 22 villages in Onda police station were intact at that time.

Reporting in 1947, Kshitish Prosad Chattopadhyay found that none of the villages surveyed in this area was 'intact' in the sense used by McAlpin in his report. The Santal village organization as an economic unit does not, therefore, exist now. It is not, however, recent. At the time of McAlpin's survey only 26 villages out of 202 examined in Raipur thana and 29 out of 84 in Simlapal thana were intact, i.e. paid rent through its Santal headman. In Robertson's Settlement Report (1926) it is clearly stated that the village community, so far as dealings with outsiders are concerned, has ceased to exist, i.e. no village was 'intact'.[2]

The team led by K. P. Chattopadhyay reported that "in all the villages the usual offices were found except that in some places the post of Kudam Naeke and in one area that of the Paranaeke were found vacant. The normal social functions were noted as being discharged by them. Rent collection is however not done through the Manjhi. ... The village cases are tried by the village council."[3]

On a recent enquiry[4] it was found that social authority in a Santal village is still exercised by the headman or the Manjhi, always in consultation with *Mõḍe Hor* (five heads) or the conventional Santal panchayat. With the setting up of statutory panchayats in recent times, the authority of the traditional village-fathers has, however, not declined. Where the modern Grām Pañchāyat supervises more people and areas than are governed by Santal traditions, the authority of the village council has, however, sufficiently declined in recent years. This is due to a number of factors among which the most important is the establishment of a direct tenant-State relationship under the Estates Acquisition Act. The judgements of the village councils are nowadays frequently breached and cases are not rare of people preferring the regular law courts to the traditional *Mõḍe*

[1] M. C. McAlpin—Report on the condition of the Sonthals in Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore. Calcutta, 1909. pp. 13-14.

[2] K. P. Chattopadhyay—Report on Santals in Northern and Western Bengal, 1945-46. Calcutta, 1947. pp. 31-32.

[3] Ibid. pp. 32-33.

[4] Information gathered from Bejoy Kumar Hembram of Ranibandh and a number of Santal gentlemen of Ranibandh police station living in Sibpur, Howrah.

Hor for settlement of their disputes. This tendency, it may be noted, is found mostly among affluent people with some educational background.

The Bauris

The Bauris numbering 1,52,744 according to the Census of 1961 and forming 9 per cent of the total population, constitute the second largest community in the district. They are mainly concentrated in the thanas of Bankura, Gangajalghati, Indpur, Chhatna, Khatra and Saltora.

Unlike what obtains with most other Hindu castes, they have no traditionally specified occupation. A Bauri myth of recent origin, claiming their ancient admittance into the Hindu fold, ascribes to them the calling of palanquin-bearers.[1] Bauris, "whose features and complexion stamp them as of non-Aryan descent, although evidence is wanting to affiliate them to any particular tribe now in existence"[2], have circumstantially been obliged to specialize in unskilled manual labour of all kinds. They are mostly found to work as unskilled wage-earning labourers in agriculture, transportation, quarrying and constructional or other small-scale industries. The most affluent of them are either share-croppers or small land owning cultivators or cycle rickshaw owners-cum-drivers. There is practically no economic stratification amongst them and they lie, both socially and economically, close to the bottom of the local Hindu society. No caste Hindu or a member of any of the *Nabasākha* groups would take water from the hand of a Bauri. Although most of the Bagdis, Keots, Lohars, Koras and Santals would not object to eating with a Bauri, quite a number of the educated and relatively affluent Bagdis and Santals would refuse to do so. All the Hindu castes as also the Santals regard themselves as socially superior to the Bauris who are prepared to concede this except in the cases of the Koras, Khairas and Lohars.

Bauris are divided into the following functionally, if not ritually, endogamous sub-castes: (*i*) Mallabhumiā, (*ii*) Sikhariā or Gobariā, (*iii*) Panchakoṭi, (*iv*) Molā or Mulo, (*v*) Dhuliā or Dhulo, (*vi*) Maluā, (*vii*) Jhāṭiā or Jheṭiā and (*viii*) Kāṭhuriā. As the names would suggest, some of these groupings are geographical while the others are occupational. Mallabhumia Bauris, curiously enough, are not to be found now in the Vishnupur-Mallabhum area. It may, however, be assumed that the geographical connotation refers to the area of origin of a particular group which need not be its present habitat. Thus the Sikharias might have originally hailed from Sikharbhum which lay in the past between the Kangsabati and Barakar rivers; the Panchakoṭis from what was once the kingdom of Panchakoṭ (spread over north-eastern parts of Purulia, south-

[1] H. H. Risley—Tribes and Castes of Bengal: An Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1891. p. 78.
[2] loc. cit.

western parts of Dhanbad, north-western parts of Bankura and the extreme western fringe of Burdwan district) and the Dhuliās from Dhalbhum.[1] It may not, therefore, be wrong to suppose that the Bauris are autochthones of an area, a portion of which is now occupied by the western and south-western parts of Bankura district.

"The few exogamous sub-divisions which we find among the Bauris have clearly been borrowed *dignitatis causa* from the higher castes, and are inoperative for matrimonial purposes, as marriage between members of the same *gotra* is not forbidden. . . .

"Traces of totemism, however, still survive in their reverence for the red-backed heron and the dog. . . . The heron is looked upon as the emblem of the tribe, and may not be killed or molested on pain of expulsion from the caste. Dogs are also sacred. A Bauri will on no account kill a dog or touch a dead dog's body, and the water of a tank in which a dog has been drowned cannot be used until an entire rainy season has washed the impurity away.

"Bauris admit into their caste members of any caste higher than themselves in social standing. No regular ceremony is appointed for such occasions: the new member merely pays to the caste *panchayat* a sum of money. . . to be spent on a feast. . . . The origin of this singular practice, which is entirely out of accord with the spirit of the caste system, is apparently to be sought in the lax views of the Bauris and Bagdis on the subject of sexual morality. In every other caste, a woman who has an intrigue with an outsider is punished by expulsion from the caste: but Bagdis and Bauris not only allow their women to live openly with men of other castes, but receive those men into their own community when, as frequently happens, they are outcasted by their own people for eating rice cooked by their mistresses."[2] (Since Risley had written, outcasting among the higher castes has become a rare punishment for breach of social norms. The economically stratified, non-homogeneous higher castes have practically no well-defined authority these days to promulgate sanctions against improper individual behaviour. Public opinion remains the only means of social control so far as deviations from the traditional rules of inter-dining are concerned. Except where it is voluntarily enforced, which happens to be the general rule, inter-dining has ceased to be an offence meriting the loss of one's caste.—Ed.).

The Bauri family is residentially patrilocal and follows a line of patrilineal descent, with daughters going away to their husbands after marriage and sons inheriting the surnames of their fathers. It is usually a primary family with man, wife and unmarried children living in the same household with an occasional room for the aged

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[1] Ibid. p. 79; B. N. Dutta—'Ethnological Notes on Some of the Castes of West Bengal', in Man in India, Vol. XV. 1936.
[2] H. H. Risley—op. cit. pp. 79-80.

parents. Different families in the patrilineal kin-group are sometimes found to live in adjoining houses sharing a common courtyard.

Caste panchayats composed of the elders of the village still exercise considerable authority in matters relating to the holding of festivals or the like and settling inter-family or intra-family disputes.

The Brahmins

Brahmins are most numerous among the higher castes or *varna* Hindus of the district. In numerical strength, they come only after the Santals and the Bauris. In the central part of the district, along the courses of the rivers Dwarakeswar and Damodar, Brahmins form, numerically, the most significant single caste-group. Immigration of Brahmins into the district goes back to ancient times. An inscription of the 4th century found in the Susunia hill provides us with one of the earliest records about the settlement of Brahmins in this part of the country.[1] It is also reasonable to suppose that throughout the mediaeval period down to the closing decades of Malla rule, numerous Brahmin families were settled with rent-free lands and other grants by affluent persons of the land-owning and trading communities to look after the spiritual well-being of the people and to carry on ritual functions in the numerous temples constructed throughout the district.[2]

Three classes of Brahmins, whose names suggest a geographical distribution, are found in Bankura. The groups are strictly endogamous in character and each occupies a definite place in a vertical scale of rank and hierarchy.

Brahmins of the Rāḍhiya *sreni* (class) are the most numerous and occupy the highest rank among the three groups. They use surnames like Banerjee, Chatterjee, Mukherjee etc. and are mostly engaged in non-manual occupations requiring an educational background. They are also in commercial undertakings and public offices to which people attach importance. As a result, they exercise both ritual and secular-social leadership. This should not, however, mean that there are no Rāḍhiya Brahmins in occupations other than those mentioned above. There are many landowners among them but even the poorest of this class would get their cultivation done through hired labour. Skilled manual jobs do not attract many Brahmins even today when the connected social stigmas are fast losing ground at least in urban areas. Rāḍhiya Brahmins are divided into five exogamous *gotras*, namely Kāsyapa, Sāndilya, Sābarna, Bātsya and Bharadwāja.

The Madhya *sreni* Brahmins profess to derive their name from the fact that their original settlements were in the district of Midnapur, lying midway (*Madhya-desa*) between Bengal and Orissa. They say that their ancestors were Rāḍhiya Brahmins who settled early in

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[1] See Chapter II, portion on Ancient History.
[2] See Chapter II, portion on Mediaeval History.

Ballal Sen's reign in pargana Maynā in Midnapur. As such, they claim a rank next only to the Rāḍhiya Brahmins. Madhya *sreni* Brahmins are divided into eight exogamous *goṭras* (namely the five of the Rāḍhiya *sreni* and Parāsara, Gautama and Ghrita-Kausika) and they also use *gāinyi* or original village-derived surnames like Bandyopādhyāy, Chattopādhyāy, Mukhopādhyāy etc. Madhya *sreni* Brahmins are less numerous in important prestige-carrying public offices or white-collar employments but they are perhaps as important as the Raḍhiyas in respectable business. They ritually serve many a caste for whom the Rāḍhiyas will not officiate.

The Utkala Brahmins of Orissan origin form a considerable section of the population of Simlapal and Indpur and are also found in Taldangra, Raipur and Ranibandh police stations. Several villages in Simlapal thana, namely Bhutshahar, Mandalgrām, Madhupur, Puipāl, Piṭhabākhrā, Mādārā, Lāekpārā, Tāldā, Bikrampur, Māchātorā, Kesikochā, Parasolā, Muidhārā, Bhelāidihi, Jorshā and Jirābād are claimed to be their oldest settlements in the district.

Utkala Brahmins are divided into seven exogamous *gotras*. Their common surnames are Sannigrahi, Dandapāṭa, Singha-Mahāpātra, Singha-Chowdhury, Singha-Baraṭhākur, Singha-Hikim, Singha-Bābu, Misra, Mahāpātra, Pātra, Satpati, Mahānti, Pāṭhak, Nāyek, Dās, Pandā, Pāin, Hotā, Praharāj, Subuddhi, Dhar, Kar, Goswāmi etc. Although most of these surnames are patrilineal, some are not exactly so although they are derived from the male line. The surname Singha-Chowdhury is usually assumed by the eldest son of a land-owning family where the law of primogeniture operates; the second son takes the surname of Singha-Hikim, the third Singha-Barathakur, the fourth and the rest Singha-Babu.

It is claimed that following the trails of Anantavarman Choḍaganga's victorious army,[1] the Utkala Brahmins came over from Orissa and settled down in the southern and south-western parts of the district which remained under Orissan suzerainty for quite some time. Another legend about the first influx of Orissan people into this part of the country is woven round the Simlapal Raj family which has been dealt with elsewhere.[2]

Utkala Brahmins ritually serve many castes for whom neither the Rāḍhiya nor the Madhya *sreni* Brahmin priests would officiate. Inter-dining between the Rāḍhiya and the Utkala Brahmins is not much in vogue but it is reported that these distinctions are progressively disappearing.

A great many Utkala Brahmins are grain traders and money-lenders in rural areas. "Many of them have made considerable fortunes out of the original cultivators by lending money on mortgages and selling up the mortgages. It is they who are largely responsible

[1] See Chapter II, portion on Ancient History.
[2] See Chapter XVI, entry 'Simlapal'.

for the dispossession of the Santals in this area."[1] Very few of the Utkala Brahmins are in white-collar employments and some of them are big landowners in the south-western thanas of the district.

The Telis

The Telis form the largest single occupational caste-group in the district. Their traditional occupation is pressing oil from mustard seeds in circular wooden oil-presses, called *ghānis*, turned by bullocks but the majority of them are now cultivators. Economically better-off Telis are either big landowners or traders in foodstuff. There is considerable economic stratification among them which finds expression in their rural *vis-a-vis* urban differences. Telis living in rural areas and depending on their age-old avocation or cultivation still prefer to be known as Telis whereas their rich urban counterparts designate themselves as Tilis in their bid to climb higher in the social hierarchy. Telis, by dint of their dealing in an essential foodstuff, has always enjoyed a high rank among all the Hindu occupational caste-groups. But the sophisticated urban Tilis are now claiming a still higher *Nabasākha* rank by dissociating themselves from the original manual work altogether. Tilis of Bankura have already been conceded a *Nabasākha* rank by Brahmins and other castes who matter in the social fabric.

Kolus, who are now the actual oil-pressers, are also designating themselves as Telis although the cultivator Telis would not readily accept them as such. In fact, all these groups—the oil-pressing Kolu-Telis, the cultivating Telis and the trading Telis—are separate endogamous groups which claim places of respective advantage in a vertical social scale. Public opinion among all the groups, which has since replaced the institutional caste panchayats, is still very strong.

The Bagdis

According to the Census of 1961 there are 93,476 Bagdis in the district forming 5.6 per cent of its total population. They are most numerous in the thanas of Patrasayer, Kotulpur, Indas, Joypur and Vishnupur. A number of myths and legends identify the Vishnupur region as the original home of the caste. One story claims the founder of the Malla line as the first Bagdi begotten by Siva and Parvati.[2] The Bagdis traditionally regard the royal house of Vishnupur as a Bagdi family despite the latter's claim to Kshatriya-hood and authorities like R. C. Dutta[3] and Oldham[4] are inclined to credit the Bagdi tradition. (For a detailed account of the origin of the Vishnupur Raj family, see Chapter II, section on Mediaeval History). From all this evidence, it appears that the Bagdis are autochthones of the Vishnupur area of the district.

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[1] F. W. Robertson—Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura, 1917-1924. Calcutta, 1926. pp. 12-13.

[2] H. H. Risley—Tribes and Castes of Bengal: An Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1891. p. 37.

[3] R. C. Dutta—'The Aboriginal Element in the Population of Bengal', in the Calcutta Review, 1882.

[4] Oldham—Some Historical and Ethnical Aspects of Burdwan District.

In Bankura, where their original caste structure seems to have been singularly well preserved, we find the Bagdis divided into the following endogamous sub-castes displaying all the usual characteristics including a vertical scale of hierarchy, viz. (1) Tentuliā : As the name seems to have been derived from tamarind or *tentul*, we may be tempted to conclude that it is a totemistic group but it cannot perhaps be so because a totemistic group, at least subjectively, is a kin-group and no kin-group can be endogamous. (2) Kāsāinkuliā : The name has a distinct geographical ring and it possibly refers to the place of origin of the group which might have hailed from the banks or *kula* of the river Kānsāi or Kangsābati. (3) Duliā or Duley or Duley-Behārā or Behārā : These names refer to the traditional occupation of the sub-caste. (4) Ojhā or Ujhā : The designation refers to the supposed traditional function of the sub-caste relating to magico-medicine. (5) Mechho Bāgdis claim to pursue one of the original occupations of the caste, namely fishing. (6) Gulimānjhi, (7) Dandamānjhi and (8) Kusmeṭiā or Kusmāṭiā or Kusputra Bāgdis claim distinction and superior rank in Bankura by virtue of membership of the sub-caste from which the Rajas of Vishnupur sprang. (The legend about the connexion of a Kusmeṭiā Bāgdi with the founder of the Vishnupur Raj family has been given in the section dealing with the origin of the Vishnupur Raj family under Chapter II). (9) Mallameṭiās : As the name would suggest, they are distinctly a people whose ancestors hailed from Mallabhum.

Within these endogamous sub-castes there are a number of exogamous clans which are common to all the sub-castes. These are—Kāsbak meaning the heron, Ponkrishi meaning the jungle cock, Sālrishi or Sālmāchh standing for a *sāl* fish, Patrishi connoting the bean and Kachchhap or Kāshyap synonymous with the tortoise or, according to another version, the sage Kāshyapa. The respective totems are taboo to the members of the *gotra* or clan. Thus a Kāsbak is not supposed to touch a heron and a Patrishi may not eat beans.

Opinions differ about the traditional occupation of the caste. Some say it is fishing, others personal service, still others palanquin bearing. A great majority of the Bagdis are, however, agricultural wage-earners today; some are share-croppers while the rest have small plots of their own. The Tentulia and Kansaikulia Bagdis show a flair for working as masons and the Duleys as transport workers, i.e. truck, bus and rickshaw drivers and mechanics. All Bagdis show a preference for fishing as an occupation. when facilities are available, but in doing so they are careful to maintain a distinction between themselves and the Mālos, the Kaibartas and such other fishing communities. Bagdis are also found to be engaged in inferior types of cotton weaving, mat making, fishing-net weaving etc. Such specialized occupations often generate technical skill which makes a sizable proportion of the Bagdis economically better off than the

general run of Bauris. Due to the difference of skill and the occupational opportunities available to individual members, the caste is relatively more stratified than the Bauris with the inevitable result that the more affluent of them strive for general education and white-collar jobs with a view to upgrading themselves in the social hierarchy although the overall social standing of the caste is still very low indeed. The Bagdis, however, rank themselves higher than the Bauris, Khairas and Lohars and an educated Bagdi would not eat with any member of these castes. The tendency among the educated and affluent Bagdis to raise their social status finds expression in their recent eagerness to designate themselves as Byagra-Kshatriyas. This proclivity is not new since we find the Rajas of Vishnupur declaring themselves as Kshatriyas from North India entirely against the testimony of history. It should, however, be noted that while the status seekers of the past eschewed all connexions with the common masses of Bagdis, the modern aspirants to Kshatriyahood claim the superior status for the caste as a whole.

Bagdis are patrilocal in residence and patrilineal in descent. *Gotra* is inherited along the male line and a woman assumes the *gotra* of her husband. For the mass of Bagdis, a primary family is the rule. Affluent Bagdis owning landed or business interests are sometimes found to favour the joint family system of a patrilineal type. Caste panchayats are found only in big Bagdi settlements; they do not usually exist in multi-caste villages where the number of Bagdis is not large. Elderly Bagdis, who are well placed in life, customarily preside over the caste panchayats which meet as and when necessary to settle minor disputes concerning deviations from established social norms and maladjustments between individuals or families. Curiously, the decision of the caste panchayat has no mandatory implication as is the case with the Santals, Koras, Lohars, Bauris and Sankharis.

The Goalas

The Goalas of Bankura invariably designate themselves as Gopas, a term which they consider as more becoming than their erstwhile denomination. Their traditional occupation was that of a milkman, confectioner or cattle raiser. But the majority of them are now small or medium-sized cultivators. Some are cultivators-cum-milk producers. The wealthier Goalas are largely dealers in sweetmeats. Most members of the caste profess Gauḍiya Vaishnavism.

Although the Goalas are not one of the *Nabasākha* castes, the fact that they are Vaishnavas, ensures for them a relatively elevated social status, at least in the Vishnupur area, which is not accorded to their counterparts in the neighbouring districts. Vaishnava Brahmins in the urban areas of Vishnupur subdivision would accept water from well-off Vaishnava Goalas but in rural areas a non-Vaishnava Brahmin will not stoop so low.

Goalas are most numerous in the eastern and north-eastern parts of

the district where they usually live in strong numerical groups. The authority exercised by the elders of a group still carries great weight with the members of the caste.[1]

The Sadgopes

The Sadgopes or Satgopes are a cultivating caste who are supposed to have separated themselves from the Goalas by abandoning pastoral pursuits and taking exclusively to agriculture. They are divided into two endogamous sub-castes—Paschim Kuliya and Purva Kuliya. Most of the Sadgopes of Bankura are Paschim Kuliyas and they profess their faith in Gauḍiya Vaishnavism. Agriculture is their characteristic pursuit. Most hold small plots themselves and also work in others' lands as share-croppers. A very small percentage can be regarded as wealthy peasants. The caste belongs to the *Nabasākha* group and Brahmins will take water and certain kinds of sweetmeats from them on ceremonial occasions.[2]

The Tambulis

Tambulis (also known by the appellations Tambuli Baniks, Tamulis and Tamlis) form one of the largest *Nabasākha* caste-groups in Bankura. In fact, one of their largest concentrations in West Bengal occurs in this district. They are found mostly along the courses of the Dwarakeswar and Damodar rivers. Tambulis living in large numbers in such prosperous and old settlements as Birsingpur-Rajhat and Sonamukhi usually refer to a legend about their immigration into Mallabhum from the Tarakeswar region in modern Hooghly district following a great flood but the story throws no light on the probable date of the occurrence.

The Tambulis of West Bengal are divided into five non-rigid endogamous sub-castes or *thāks*. These are (i) Saptagrāmi or Kushādyas, (ii) Aṣṭagrāmi or Kaṭki, (iii) Chauddagrāmi, (iv) Biyāllisgrāmi and (v) Bardhamāni. As the names suggest, the sub-castes are geographical groupings. The first-named reportedly came from northern India and settled at Saptagrām or Sātgaon. An outrage committed on one of their maidens by the Governor of the place induced them to move to Kushādya in 24-Parganas. But some must have migrated west to the Vishnupur region, for there is a considerable number of Tambulis there belonging to the Saptagrāmi *thāk*. A similar North Indian origin is also claimed by the members of the Biyallisgrami *thāk*, the largest of the five sub-castes, who are supposed to have entered Bengal at a still earlier date. The Chauddagrami, which is now reckoned to be the highest ranking sub-caste, is said to have originated from one Sasthibhar Singha of the Biyallisgrami sub-caste, who lost his original caste affiliation by marrying a woman belonging to the Bardhamani sub-caste some time before 1582 A.D.[3] Chauddagramis reside in Bankura in large

[1] H. H. Risley—Tribes and Castes of Bengal: An Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1891. pp. 288-90.
[2] H. H. Risley—Ibid. Vol. II. pp. 212-14.
[3] Ibid. p. 292.

numbers. The Bardhamani sub-caste supposedly had its earliest settlement in Burdwan district but they are now most numerous in Birbhum with only a few living within Bankura. Astagramis, holding the lowest rank, are not many in the district. As is evident, the Tambulis have a vertical scale of social ranking.

"To prepare and sell betel-leaf, which they buy from the cultivators, is believed to be the original ritual occupation of the caste. ... The Tamulis have long since abandoned this special business and taken to dealing in grain and petty shop-keeping."[1] Some are now employees of trading concerns, a certain number hold land and many are in white-collar jobs in the educational, legal and administrative branches of the economy. In Bankura, a large number of wholesale traders belong to this caste. By dint of their affluence, fortified by education in recent times, many of the Tambulis have risen to positions of social leadership. No Tambuli will normally put his hand to the plough himself and those members of the caste who have taken to agriculture are, with rare exceptions, rich peasants.

"The social rank of the caste is respectable. They are usually classed among the *Nabasakha* and. . . Brahmins will take water from their hands."[2] In exceptional cases, Brahmins and Chhatris would not accept any kind of food from a Tambuli but the underlying reason relates more often to economic difference than social disparity. Amongst the Tambulis themselves, a member of one sub-caste will not take cooked food from that of another. All of them will, however, accept cooked food from Brahmins, Vaidyas, Kayasthas and Chhatris who, while dining, would refuse to sit with them in the same line. The caste is given to orthodox religious practices and cherishes a strong public opinion which effectively controls its social and moral codes.

Both joint and unitary (or primary) families are found among the Tambulis, a preference for the former being evident among families owning joint business or substantial landed properties while primary families are common among salaried people of low income groups.

The Lohars

Lohars, forming 2.2 per cent of the total population of the district, are mainly concentrated in Raipur, Simlapal, Vishnupur, Onda, Patrasayer and Joypur police stations. According to Risley, they "are a large and heterogeneous aggregate, comprising members of several different castes and tribes, who in different parts of the country took up the profession of working in iron."[3] But a large number of Lohars are now either landless wage-earning cultivators or share-croppers and many of them are employed as skilled or unskilled labourers in various small-scale industries. There is very little economic stratification within the caste.

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[1] ibid. p. 294.
[2] loc. cit.
[3] ibid. p. 22.

The Lohars of Bankura are divided into three geographically determined endogamous sub-castes, namely (i) Birbhumiā, originally hailing from Birbhum, (ii) Govindapuriā, originally of the Govindapur region of northern Manbhum and (iii) Shergariā, who came over from the Shergarh pargana of Burdwan. Each sub-caste is further sub-divided into a number of exogamous clans, such as Sālmāchh, Gobrā, Jhetiā, Angariā and Pānsili, which, according to Risley, are probably totemistic kin-groups. The Lohars of Bankura employ Brahmins for their rituals but the latter never accept water from their hands and regard them as belonging to the same inferior rank as the Bauris, Bagdis and Khairas.

The Karmakars

The Karmakars are a *Nabasākha* caste from whom Brahmins can take water and other *Nabasākha* castes, cooked food. They are, by tradition, metal workers and traders in metalware and the high skill that they usually bring to bear on their craft ensures for them an economic status superior to that of the Lohars. They are found in large numbers in all the important centres of metal industries in the district[1] with considerable economic and prestige stratifications amongst themselves. For various reasons many of the Karmakars have since taken to agriculture.

Karmakars are divided into a number of strictly endogamous sub-castes in accordance with the respective metals in which they work or in which their ancestors used to work. For all practical purposes, such groups may now be regarded as full-fledged castes. Lohar-Karmakars work in iron, Pitule-Karmakars handle brass, Kānsāris manufacture bell-metal articles and Swarnakārs fashion jewellery etc. in gold. All these sub-castes, having the usual Brahminical exogamous sections or *gotras*, are again sub-divided into semi-endogamous geographical groupings.

The Sunris

Sunris are traditional manufacturers, distillers and sellers of spirituous liquors. Because of the social odium usually attached to their calling, they are given a very low rank in the caste hierarchy. None of the twice-born castes (*dwija varna*) would accept water from a Sunri although those of them used to drinks would not object to liquors prepared by him. Many members of the caste are now petty traders and businessmen and only a very few are agriculturists. There is some economic stratification among the Sunris. The Sāhās, who have acquired wealth, landed properties and some education through the banking business, dissociate themselves completely from the common Sunris and designate themselves as Vaisya Sahas.

The Sunris of Bankura belong to the geographically determined endogamous sub-caste called Rāḍhi-*sreni* and they do not enter into matrimonial alliance with their counterparts of the Bārendra-*sreni*.

[1] See Chapter V on Industries and XVI on Places of Interest.

Sunris are fast grouping themselves into the standard Brahminical *gotras* or exogamous clans—a development which was not noticed by Risley when he published his well-known work in 1891.

The Chhatris

Chhatris or Rajputs, claiming descent from the Rajput mercenaries of old, are to be found in almost all the thanas of the district. They form a strictly endogamous group and are in the midst of a process of cultural change. They eat rice only once a day and that before nightfall. Their evening repast usually consists of wheat *chāpāṭis* for which they grow on their lands some wheat along with paddy. They eat fish but the elders would not touch eggs.

The marriage ceremony of a Chhatri is held strictly according to the injunctions of Rajput custom. They address their relations in Rajput terms. They appear to be very vigilant about the purity of their blood and would try to avoid in all possible ways the 'low-born' Chhatris, i.e. those born out of wedlock between a Chhatri and a Bengali. A legend is current among certain sections of this caste that the Malla Rajas of Vishnupur once convened a conference of Chhatris of Bankura to seek confirmation of their admittance to Kshatriyahood. A section of the assembly agreed but others disapproved the proposal. The Rajas rewarded the first group with gifts of land and the hereditary title of Singha-Ṭhākur. Their opponents promptly ceased to consider the Singha-Ṭhākurs as real Chhatris and stopped having all social connexions with them. The Singha-Ṭhākurs thus form to this day a distinct section among the Chhatris.

The Bankura Chhatris do not have any prejudice, as such, against the high-caste Bengali Brahmins who are frequently appointed by them to conduct their religious ceremonies. They do not have anything like the *Upa-purohits* of the Chhatris of the Hooghly district. But their spiritual guides or 'gurus' are invariably chosen from the ranks of Kanaujiā Brahmins. They speak the local Bengali dialect but do not see eye to eye with the Bengalis over some of the latters' habits which do not conform to their own. Such last-ditch resistance is not altogether unexpected from an outlandish group of people against whom the inexorable forces of history are consistently at work to bring about their complete cultural merger with the enveloping masses of Bengalis.

The Bhumijs

The Bhumijs (lit. 'sons of the soil') are one of the autochthonous tribes inhabiting the tract of land known to the ancient[1] and mediaeval[2] chroniclers as Jhārkhand or Jhārikhand, a large part of which was included in the district of Jungle Mahāls in 1805. Bhumij tradition points to the areas under the erstwhile Barābhum Raj[3] (which included a large portion of Ranibandh police station) as

[1] See Chapter II, Section on Ancient History.
[2] See Chapter II, Section on Mediaeval History.
[3] E. T. Dalton—Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. Calcutta, 1872. p. 174.

the original home of the tribe. Since very early times, the Bhumijs have been known to the outsiders by the derogatory term 'Chuar'[1] which was stretched by the Hindus to include the autochthonous Koras, Khairas and Bauris as the image of the 'Chuar' among them was that of an unclean jungle robber.

When the jungle tracts of Jharkhand began to be brought under the suzerainty of local or distant authorities, the Bhumij chiefs were usually placated through grants of extensive rent-free lands for performance of certain police duties. These chiefs came to be known as Ghāṭwāls or the guardians of the jungle passes and their landed rights as Ghāṭwāli tenures. Ghatwals, in their turn, used to parcel out their lands among the members of the tribe, who were obliged to render armed service when called upon by the Ghatwals to do so. There thus arose an elaborate hierarchy of officials pledged to provide armed assistance like the Ghatwal Sardārs, Sādiāls, Tādedār Ghatwals, Digars, Simānādārs and Itmāndārs or Mandals.[2] This system gave rise to a considerable class distinction among the Bhumijs many of whom, used meanwhile to exercise unfettered local authority, resorted to violence and gang dacoity to signify their disapproval of things not liked by them. When the question of resumption of the rent-free Ghatwali tenures by the Company's government was mooted in the early years of the 19th century, many Ghatwal Sardars and local chiefs, who had in the meantime acquired considerable landed properties, broke into open rebellion.[3] It is perhaps largely due to the expressed Bhumij resistance to the leadership of the landed Hindu gentry, who were supposed to side with the foreign power, that the Bhumijs could not secure a respectable rank in the local caste and tribe hierarchy despite their almost wholesale acceptance of Hindu beliefs and practices. The Bhumijs, nonetheless, consider themselves superior in social status to the artisan communities although they are not very sure about their position *vis-a-vis* the *Nabasākha* castes. The Rajput Kshatriyas hold out before them the most cherished model of material and ceremonial prosperity.[4] In fact, wealthy landowning Bhumijs exhibit a tendency these days to declare themselves as Kshatriyas. The well-to-do Bhumijs employ Brahmins as family priests but the latter do not take water from their hands.

The Bhumijs of Bankura are divided into four non-rigid endogamous sub-tribes, namely (*i*) Sikhariyā (or Meno), the name having a ring of their supposed original homeland in Sikharbhum, (*ii*) Desi, (*iii*) Barābhumiā, which bears a reference to their supposed alternative homeland in Barābhum and (*iv*) Shelo, which term perhaps alludes to their original occupation of iron smelting. These sub-

[1] See Chapter II, Section on Modern History.
[2] See Chapter X on Land Revenue Administration.
[3] See Chapter II, Section on Modern History.
[4] Surajit Sinha—'The Media and Nature of Hindu-Bhumij Interactions' in Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters and Science, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, 1957.

tribes are further sub-divided into a number of totemistic exogamous groups, namely Badda Kurkuṭiā (a kind of worm), Bhuiyā (a fish), Gulgu (another kind of fish), Hānsdā (wild goose), Hemrong (betel-palm), Jaru (a bird), Kāsyab or Kāshyap (tortoise), Leng (mushroom), Nāg (snake), Obarsāri (a bird), Sālrishi (the *sāl* fish), Sāndilya (a bird), Tumārung (pumpkin), Ṭulṭi (a kind of vegetable) and Bardā, Chāndil, Pilā, Sāgmā and Saolā, of which the totemistic equivalents are not known. Wealthy Bhumijs show a predilection for those sub-castes the names of which are capable of easy Sanskritization like Kāshyap, Nāg, Sālrishi or Sāndilya. Some of them are even adopting the *gotras* found among the Rajput Kshatriyas, especially those associated with the sun or the moon.

The social status of Ghatwal Sardars, Sadiyals and Taraf Sardars are very high among the Bhumijs. They are the ones who take the social decisions and adjudicate minor disputes. In the areas where these traditional guardians are absent, there is practically no caste authority to guide the course of individual behaviour.

The Koras

Bankura has the third largest number of Koras in West Bengal comprising of 13.79 per cent of the total Kora population in the State. They are mainly concentrated in the thanas of Khatra, Saltora, Ranibandh and Raipur. They are not autochthones of West Bengal as they appear to have migrated from their original homeland in the Chotanagpur area of Bihar.

Risley states, "Koras are a Dravidian caste of earth workers and cultivators, probably an offshoot from the Munda tribe. The Koras of Manbhum and Bankura have well-marked totemistic sections of the same type as the Mundas." S. C. Ray thinks that Koras are a branch of the Oraons who designate themselves alternatively as Modis—a term having an occupational connotation. According to Risley and others, the traditional occupation of the Modi-Koras is digging of wells and tanks, road making and earth-work. Risley noticed that "In Bankura, and in other districts of West Bengal, their (Koras') connection with land must be of very ancient date, for we see a certain number of them at the present day in possession of substantial Ghatwali tenures, a fact which indicates that they are among the earliest settlers in that part of the country." Regarding their present occupations, it is seen that most of them are agriculturists and earn their livelihood mainly from this source either as agricultural labourers, share-croppers or owner-cultivators. Earthwork, hunting etc. are now merely secondary occupations taken up by them off-season.

The Koras of Bankura are divided into a number of totemistic exogamous clans. Their clan names are not exclusive to the tribe as some of them are also found amongst the Santals, Mundas etc. Nuclear or primary families are the rule with the Koras although minor extensions are allowed. About their social position Risley

writes, "The social position of Koras is very low, and they are usually classed with Bagdis, Bauris, Bunas and other dwellers on the confines of Hinduism. . . . In Bankura the Koras do not eat either beef or pork. Koras of Bankura will eat sweetmeats etc. with the members of the Bagdi caste, but will neither take water from their hands nor smoke the same hookah. Boiled rice they will take only from the members of the *Nabasakha* group."

The village and pargana panchayats as they exist today settle only minor socio-religious disputes. The head of the *pānch*, composed of the village elders, is known as *Mājhi* and his assistant as '*Koṭāl*' and these posts are hereditary.[1]

The Khairas

The Khairas, a small scheduled caste community of West Bengal, are distributed almost all over the State, their main concentration being in the district of Bankura. Risley thought that Khairas formed "a cultivating sub-caste of the Bagdis of Bengal" and were synonymous with the Koras[2] but members of this caste deny this supposition.

"The present day Khairas of Bankura district earn their livelihood mainly as day labourers or agricultural labourers, very few of them have their own land and some of them are also employed in house-building, woodcraft, weaving etc. Most of these Khairas believe that their ancestors were once *Ghatwal Sardars* i.e. watchmen. But in course of time with the change of tenure system and police system, the necessity of *Ghatwal Sardars* came to an end, and ultimately they had to change their occupation. . . . Because of their occupation as day labour, they are often considered by the people of the higher occupational groups as having a very low status, as it is a common trend to consider ordinary day labourer's work occupying a very low position in the occupational hierarchy."[3] Sorokin is of the opinion that "it is an almost universal and permanent fact that the occupational groups of unskilled manual workers have always been at the bottom of occupational cone. . . . They are most poorly paid, enjoy the least prestige, maintain the lowest standard of living, and have the least participation in controlling power in a society."[4]

Manis Kumar Raha, who has made a special study of the Khairas of Bankura, says that they "are an endogamous social group, having a number of exogamous totemic clans or *Gotras*. Risley had also observed a well-marked totemistic organization among these people like that of the Mundas. Totem names for these people have generally been taken from different animals, plants etc. They reckon their present descent through male line. . . .

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[1] Amal Kumar Das—The Korās and Some Little Known Communities of West Bengal. Calcutta, 1964. p. 52.

[2] H. H. Risley—Tribes and Castes of Bengal: An Ethnographic Glossary, Vol. I. pp. [illegible].

[3] Manis Kumar Raha—'The Khairas of Bankura' in Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute, Vol. III. No. 1, 1964. p. 41.

[4] P. A. Sorokin—Social and Cultural Mobility. New York, 1959. p. 102.

"For the last few decades a section of the Khairas who are comparatively well off and a bit educated and enlightened than others of their community, started a movement for attaining a higher social position in the regional caste hierarchy, and this process has further been accelerated due to the influence of the educated caste Hindus of the region who often advise them to give up their traditional habits which are considered by the neighbouring people as bad and unclean."[1]

In 1924 a movement was started among the Khairas of the district for the amelioration of their social, economic and religious conditions but it petered out due to various reasons. About a decade back, an organization styled 'Taldangra Thana Anunnata Hindu Unnayan Samity' (Society for the Uplift of the Depressed Hindus of Taldangra Thana) was formed mainly by the Khairas of Barkānta village of Panchmura Union in Taldangra police station with the same objectives. The organization is getting assistance from the State Government since 1954 and is now engaged in constructive work to achieve its ideals.

SOCIAL LIFE

Relations between social classes, castes and tribes

Bankura being primarily an agricultural district, agrarian relations are very important in the socio-economic context. Before the enactment of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act of 1953, agrarian relations in Bankura were based upon those between the ryot or the cultivating under-tenants and the zemindars. Prior to the acquisition of the *Diwāni* by the E. I. Company, most parts of the present-day district were under the Vishnupur Raj. The Chhatna Raj, the Raipur Raj, the Phulkusma Raj, the Ambikanagar Raj, the Simlapal Raj etc. also held considerable lands. They used to settle portions of their territories to subordinate chiefs for the protection of the frontiers and maintenance of law and order. But between 1765 and 1793 most of the original zemindars lost substantial parts of their holdings, due, *inter alia*, to an exorbitant increase in land revenue.[2] The bulk of the landed properties of the Vishnupur Raj, for instance, was sold to the Burdwan Raj for arrears of land revenue and certain other portions were similarly purchased by new wealthy merchants or other non-resident parties from urban areas. Older zemindars continued in certain localities but with much reduced holdings. "These new landlords. . . were interested only in rents they could squeeze from the land; often they delegated collection to middlemen (called *patnidārs*) who contracted to pay high sums annually. The latter, in turn, sublet to still other classes of middlemen (called *dar-patnidārs*), speculators and absentee landlords."[3] Although the

[1] Manis Kumar Raha—op. cit. p. 42.

[2] See Chapter X on Land Revenue Administration.

[3] Daniel and Alice Thorner—Land and Labour in India. Bombay, 1962. pp. 53-54.

number of absentee landlords was always less in Bankura than in the adjacent districts of Hooghly, Burdwan or Midnapur, the Bankura ryots, more often than not, had to pay their rents to some intermediary or other at a rate much higher than what was paid by the topmost zemindar to the State, the excess being usurped by the several layers of idle intermediaries.

Whatever might have been their ethnic origin, most of the original landlords of the district had designated themselves as Kshatriyas and the local Brahmins had admitted their claims. The Permanent Settlement did not materially affect this caste composition of the big landed gentry of Bankura although the most important of them, the Raja of Burdwan, was a non-resident zemindar. But the real landlords with whom the under-tenants had direct relations were the sub-tenure holders who came mostly from the *dwija varna* (twice-born) and *vaishya varna* castes among whom Brahmins, Vaidyas, Chhatris, Tambulis, Telis and Gandhabaniks predominated. At the lowest rung of the agricultural ladder were the wage-earning agricultural labourers mostly belonging to the Santal, Kora, Bauri, Bagdi and Lohar communities. The *korfā* ryots (or the non-occupancy cultivators, according to the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885), were slightly better off than the wage-earning labour but they could be evicted any time by the landlords. Usually, the Bauris, Bagdis and Lohars were the *korfā* ryots many of whom took up share-cropping to augment their subsistence incomes. The lot of the *sthitibān* ryots was a little better than that of the *korfā* ryots inasmuch as they held rent-free homestead lands and could not be evicted at the bidding of the landlord. But they, along with all the other classes of tenants mentioned above, were under an obligation, widely practised in Bankura, to render some kind of gratuitous service or other to the landlords known as *begār*. The share-croppers, because of their lowest economic standing, were the special victims of this feudal system.

The resident landlords, whose number was not small in the district, were the leaders of the rural society by virtue of the economic powers they exercised over the peasantry. Brahmin zemindars were no doubt revered for their ritual status and their leadership, especially in the religious field, was an accepted fact. Where the landlord was not a Brahmin, his Brahmin tenants used to receive reverential indulgence and deferential treatment. There thus used to be some sort of a tie-up of the secular leadership exercised by the zemindars and ritual leadership commanded by the Brahmins. In this leadership continuum, the richer Brahmins generally had a bigger say than their poorer castemen. Zemindar families of the pre-Permanent Settlement days and certain other enlightened landholding families, who had contributed to public welfare, used to enjoy and still enjoy a leadership lovingly conceded to them by the common people. Of the non-resident zemindars with whom the ryots never came into

direct contact, exceptional instances like the Raja of Burdwan still enjoy a charism.

Impact of recent land legislations on social relations

With the enactment of the Estates Acquisition Act of 1953 and the fixation of land ceilings under the Land Reforms Act of 1955, the big and the absentee landlords have disappeared from the scene but not without leaving some mark on rural life. A recent analytical study[1] reveals that, "out of their former holdings, the zamindars were allowed to retain all lands they could prove to have had under their personal cultivation or *Khudkhast* (zamindars') land" and that before the passing of the Estates Acquisition Act, "in order to prevent their tenants from obtaining permanent rights, the zamindars took to moving them (the cultivators) around from year to year or even from crop season to crop season, thereby preventing them from acquiring permanent rights to any particular plots of land. Further, the landlords have also connived at wholesale falsification of village records. On this basis they managed to evict old tenants who would otherwise have had full claims to occupancy rights."[2] Many of the resident landlords, mainly middle and small-sized zemindars, *patnidārs* and *darpatnidārs* etc., devised means to evade the law by nominally dividing their lands among their relations and friends so that each of the newly created holdings fell below the legal ceilings.[3] The West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953 and the Land Reforms Act, 1955 have done away with all intermediary rights in land and the cultivator now pays his rent direct to the State. The share-croppers and the landless labourers, however, still have direct relations with the owners of the land which they till. The middle and small land-holders of former times have now become the main owner-cultivators in the rural areas. They cultivate with the help of farm-servants, locally known as *māhindārs*, or employ casual labour, called *chhuṭo munish*, during agricultural operations. The *māhindārs* receive fixed wages depending on the nature of the work and also get meals and clothings from the owner. Besides working in the field throughout the year, they perform domestic service in the owner's household. The *munish*, on the other hand, is a contract labourer who works for a particular season for which he is paid in kind (usually in paddy or rice) on working days and puffed rice (*muḍi*) and tobacco as perquisites. The *munish* is free to work elsewhere when the owner does not require him. Cash wages constitute a very small portion of the total wages paid to agricultural labour in the district.[4] Agricultural labour of the various categories mentioned above belong mostly to the Santal, Kora, Bauri, Bagdi and Lohar communities.[5]

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[1] Alice and Daniel Thorner—Land and Labour in India. Bombay, 1962. p. 62.
[2] ibid. p. 63.
[3] loc. cit.
[4] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—Kashipur (P. S. Sonamukhi), West Bengal, 1956-60: A Report on Re-survey of a Village. Santiniketan, 1962. pp. 8-9.
[5] loc. cit.

Rural leadership and power structure

The wealthy cultivators, as a rule, are from the higher castes including the *Nabasākha* castes, namely Brahmins, Tambulis, Tilis, Telis, Baidyas, Gandhabaniks etc. who enjoy the organizational, institutional and political leadership in an agrarian society. A new element in the chain of rural leadership is the village money-lender who has always been a powerful person but did not experience any leadership in the rural set-up before the waning of the powers of the zemindars. With the decline of the zemindary system, many of the wealthy peasants have themselves become money-lenders and their erstwhile hold on the society has facilitated their entry into the field of social leadership.

The up-and-coming peasant gentry having the wherewithal to provide education to their children are utilizing the opportunities well, which the poorer classes are not in a position to do. Educational attainments are not only adding prestige to their already attained social status and vesting them with a right to leadership but are also helping them to monopolize all the white-collar professions available in the rural areas. More often than not, the village teachers and doctors are to be found among the joint families of the big owner-cultivator class.[1]

With the setting up of Grām Sabhās and Anchal Panchāyats under the West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1957 and the entrance of national political parties into rural politics, the leadership of the big peasant, money-lender, members of white-collar professions and other educated people has found an institutional base. These influential people of today are invariably members of higher castes, including the *Nabasākha* castes, who have yet to overcome their age-old caste rivalries and forge a harmonious social unity under the present changed circumstances. The social power structure, studied under the auspices of the Anthropological Survey of India in an old and prosperous village named Ajodhyā in Vishnupur police station, reveals that caste-groups still play an important role in the sphere of social behaviour. They dominate every field of rural life and are often the deciding factors even in political issues.

"In the pre-British time, the village administration was carried on by the traditional village panchayats composed of elders of different castes or by the hereditary village headman. The British system did not directly interfere with the caste panchayat or the village panchayat, locally known as 'Solo-ana'. But the authority of the village panchayat to regulate social behaviour of the people was never statutorily recognized then. The British Government not only acknowledged the individual rights of a villager on land but also in law courts. The penalties which the caste elders effectively used, such as, punitive fines, social boycott, and even physical torture

[1] Ibid. pp. 21-30.

could no longer be used effectively. Boycott became a punishable offence under the law. This weakened the absolute power of the panchayats. Traditional caste panchayats are now in existence only among the illiterate, afraid of going to law courts to settle their disputes.

"Today's Ajodhya village still has localities on the caste basis—Brahminpara, Kamarpara and Tilipara as in other villages. Even participation in the village festivals is on the *para* (locality) basis. The caste dominates issues involving a locality. It is the local people's representative—a Brahmin, a Karmakar (a blacksmith, here a bell-metal worker) or a Tili (really an oilman, now a farmer)—who goes to the Gram Sabhas. As regards representation on the Anchal Panchayat, manoeuvring by the educated people helps them to win seats. The educated are naturally from the higher castes. A recent election to a Gram Panchayat in the village showed that Karmakars easily elected their own representative by defeating a Brahmin opponent living in that locality who had almost no supporters. In the Anchal Panchayat election, however, two *Nabasakha* castes made an alliance but were unable to win a seat as they have yet to learn political manoeuvring. It was clear that the three castes behaved like 'interest groups'. The rigours of commensality laws have waned Adult suffrage and development plans have given impetus to political activity which now often has a caste bias to suit the ends.

"Illiterate peasant masses still depend on educated members of upper-castes when entangled in litigation and such upper-caste members who are conversant with the procedures of law suits are alleged to be extorting money from the less fortunate people; on doctors, who are 'feared most' lest, for any move on the part of the farmers, they should refuse to treat them or the members of their families; on money-lenders, who have direct contact with Government officers and influential political leaders outside the village; and on primary school teachers who mould public opinion in the area considerably."[1]

Share-croppers

Share-cropping is very much in vogue in the district. Most of the big cultivating owners let out their land to *bargādārs* (share-croppers) on a predetermined ratio for apportionment of the produce. The West Bengal Bargadars Act of 1950 conferred certain occupational rights to *bargādārs* who have been tilling fixed pieces of lands for five years in succession. But the Act "seems to have brought about little change in the position of the share-croppers because (*i*) the share-cropper had no record of rights which are defined

[1] From the summary results of a survey on social power structure conducted by Santibhusan Nandi under the auspices of the Anthropological Survey of India, in the village of Ajodhya, P. S. Vishnupur, published in The Statesman, Calcutta, dated 17.1.65.

only by verbal contract and (*ii*) the landless share-cropper did not dare push his claims lest his tenure might be discontinued,"[1] and (*iii*) no *jotdār* would ever allot the same piece of land to the same share-cropper on successive years, lest he should acquire a right on that land. The treatment meted out to land-owning share-croppers, who include a fair number of upper caste cultivators, is usually better than that accorded to their landless counterparts who are mostly from depressed castes and tribes. The greatest benefit that has emanated from the recent land legislations and consequent changes in the structure of agrarian relations is the total abolition of the *begār* system which has brought welcome relief to countless share-croppers suffering under this oppressive arrangement.

Social relations *vis-a-vis* handicrafts

The occupational distribution of the people in Bankura still largely follows the traditional caste patterns. Agriculture and white-collar avocations are more or less exceptions to this rule. But in the traditional rural industries, castes still govern the callings although considerable economic stratification within a caste-group engaged in the same occupation is observed particularly among the *Nabasākha* artisan castes. It is not unusual, for instance, to come across an employer and employee relationship existing between a Karmakar who owns a brass or bell-metal workshop and another member of the same caste who works in the same factory as a wage-earning artisan. In the traditional handicrafts, the artisans work under a system of advances offered by urban traders in lieu of stipulated quantities of products to be delivered to them within a fixed period. This seemingly contractual relation may be so in the case of well-off artisans who have the capacity and the means to undo their indebtedness but for a large number of the poorer craftsmen, who work with small fixed capitals and can only produce just enough to keep themselves above subsistence levels, the system often reduces itself to that type of relationship which exists between a master and his bondsmen. Such unfortunate operatives mostly come from the lower castes and tribes which also supply the bulk of unskilled labour engaged in rural industries. Skilled workers in small-scale industries are, however, to be found from every caste irrespective of their traditional occupations. The proprietorship of rural industries is still largely in the hands of people of higher castes, including the *Nabasākha* castes with a trading and business past. Some of the owners of small-scale industrial units in the district are immigrants from other States. Practices relating to contract and commensality, so long held as important ingredients of caste distinctions, are fast losing ground among the urban populace but caste identities are not. Rules of endogamy are still being adhered to both by the rural and the urban people.

[1] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—op. cit. p. 8.

Property, inheritance and family structure

The *Dāyabhāga* system of inheritance obtains among the Bengali Hindus proper. The introduction of the Hindu Succession Act does not appear to have brought about any material change in the situation. The Act confers rights on daughters to share paternal property equally with brothers but the beneficiaries seldom lay a claim to ancestral property even now as it is a long standing practice with the higher castes and affluent classes to look after a widowed daughter or sister when she is obliged to leave her husband's family. The undivided Hindu joint family found in the district is usually composed of several elementary families having collateral kinship relations in the paternal line. Each son inherits an equal share in his father's portion of the property and remains a partner of the property so long as it remains joint. There is no bar to acquire individual property as distinct from the joint property. The classical type of undivided Hindu joint family was one in which all the members shared one household and lived in the same mess. But this type is fast disappearing and only vestiges of it are to be found among landowning families belonging to the upper castes and a few trading families of the *Nabasākha* caste-groups. The more common type of joint family found in the district is the one in which the source of income, namely lands, business interests etc. remain under joint ownership but there are separate hearths for each of the component families. It is often found that elementary families, sharing the same paternal house or living in different households on the same homestead land, have kitchens of their own. With the fixation of ceilings on individual holdings, an important change has taken place in the structure of big land-owning families. To evade the ceilings, aggregate lands have mostly been divided up according to individual shares but family ties have been tightened at the same time to prevent a real break-up of the joint family.

It may be mentioned here that among the old zemindar families of the Utkal Brahmin, Kshatriya, Rajput and Chhatri castes, such as the Raj families of Vishnupur, Raipur or Simlapal, some sort of law of primogeniture is in operation conferring on the eldest son the family title, the family seat and by far the largest share of the family property. The other sons inherit lesser shares and when their families live in the same household they do so at the grace of the eldest brother and the joint family also exists at his will.

Among the Santals, Bhumijs, Koras, Lohars and Khairas the eldest son gets a bigger share of paternal property from which women are totally debarred. In certain cases, however, the women are entitled to inherit a cow or a goat or some of the family jewellery and clothings. Among the landowning Bhumijs the eldest son necessarily inherits the family title and the seat. Curiously enough, the depressed castes and tribes generally show a tendency to form joint families by fusing

together a number of elementary units when they acquire some landed property.[1]

The overall trend is, however, towards the abolition of the joint family system and this may be attributed to certain factors of recent origin. The growth of a family due to natural causes often renders its income inadequate and certain members are obliged to shift elsewhere and fend for themselves. Spread of education and opening up of avenues for urban employment have also accelerated the dissolution of the joint family. The artisans, irrespective of whether they belong to the *Nabasākha* or the *jal-achal* ('non-pure') castes, usually form elementary family groups. Landless share-croppers, mostly belonging to the depressed castes and tribes, generally prefer to live in primary families. Santals, Koras, Khairas, Lohars and Bauris, most of whom have little properties to own or inherit, usually live in elementary families comprising man and wife and their unmarried children.

Among the Muslims, sons and daughters inherit the paternal property equally. Most of the Muslims living in the district on agriculture have extended families with first and/or second generation kinship ties on the paternal side. Those engaged in business and white-collar jobs are equally divided between extended and elementary household groups but artisans, more often than not, are found to prefer elementary families.

The Indian Christians, who are mostly converts, follow the Hindu or tribal succession practices but their family structure is almost universally of the elementary type.

Home life, household patterns etc.

A sample survey, embracing 20 per cent of the households in the district, carried out by the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal and Sikkim in 1961, throws interesting light on the composition of households in relation to corresponding land holdings. Of the surveyed households, 3,303 or 8.8 per cent owned less than one acre of land each and a family in this group consisted, on an average, 4.8 members with 0.1 married males and 0.25 married females related to the heads of the households (excluding their wives) living in the same mess. A vast majority of the heads of the households were males and only 2 among 345 female heads of households were officiating in that capacity when their husbands were living in the family.

Of the sampled households, 13,030 or 34.6 per cent owned between 1.0 and 2.4 acres of land and had families averaging 4.9 persons of whom 0.16 were married males and 0.33 married females other than the wives of the heads of the households. Of only 1,037 female heads of households, 10 were officiating in that capacity in the presence of their spouses in the respective families.

[1] Ibid. p. 16.

Of the surveyed households, again, 11,242 or 29.9 per cent had from 2.5 to 4.9 acres of lands each and the average size of a household was 5.9 persons of whom 0.28 were married males and 0.52 married women other than wives of the heads of the households. 14 out of 472 female heads of households were officiating as such when their husbands were residing in the respective families.

5,656 or 15.0 per cent of households held between 5.0 and 7.4 acres of land and had, on an average, 7.2 persons in each family of whom 0.43 were married males and 0.81 married women other than the wives of the heads of the households.

1,323 or 3.5 per cent of the households had from 10.0 to 12.4 acres of land each with an average of 9.2 persons in each household of whom 0.64 were married males and 1.2 were married females other than the wives of the heads of the families.

832 or 2.2 per cent of households held between 15.0 and 29.9 acres of land with 10.0 persons, on an average, in each family, of whom 0.68 were married males and 1.3 were married women.

The foregoing statistics definitely establish a positive correlation between the extent of landholding and the size of the average household. The survey also establishes the fact that the elementary family is the rule. Dearth of married males living in the families points to that effect. But the almost 1 : 2 ratio of married males to married women, other than wives of the heads of the households, may be indicative of a legacy of the joint family system. It is also possible that many married young men go out of their villages to earn a livelihood elsewhere leaving their wives and children under the protection of their parents. The figures do not, however, rule out altogether the possibility of the existence of joint families. As has been pointed out already, the most prevalent form of joint family is the one in which the sources of income and the homestead remain unfragmented but hearths become separate. This latter tendency is, by itself, indicative of a transition towards unitary families. Secondly, many of the extended families are perhaps single-generation kinship structures consisting of brothers, their wives and their minor or unmarried children. Paucity of married males in the family and the 1 : 2 ratio between married males and married women may perhaps be interpreted as evidence supporting the existence of the single-generation joint family. It is probable that many of the households having more than 5.9 persons are extended families but it should be conceded at the same time that many others are of a unitary structure.

Marriages

Age and marital status

The table below, prepared from data provided by the 1961 Census, gives, in respective age groups, the percentages of unmarried, married, widowed and divorced or separated males and females in relation to the total number of males and females in the district:

AGE AND MARITAL STATUS IN BANKURA DISTRICT ACCORDING TO CENSUS, 1961

Age group	Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced or Separated	
	Percentage of		Percentage of		Percentage of		Percentage of	
	Males to the total male population	Females to the total female population	Males to the total male population	Females to the total female population	Males to the total male population	Females to the total female population	Males to the total male population	Females to the total female population
All ages	55.9	39.2	40.5	44.01	3.2	16.1	0.3	0.6
10-14	99.2	67.6	0.7	31.6	0.02	0.3	0.01	0.2
15-19	89	12.5	10.8	84.5	0.1	1.8	0.1	1.1
20-24	50.7	3	48.6	91.5	0.4	4.1	0.3	1.3
25-29	16.5	1.6	81.5	88.7	1.1	8.4	0.8	1.2
30-34	7.4	0.8	90.1	83.4	1.7	14.7	0.7	1.1
35-39	3.9	0.5	91.9	75.5	3.1	23.1	1.1	0.8

The above table may be profitably compared with another below prepared from similar data provided by the 1931 Census:

AGE AND MARITAL STATUS IN BANKURA DISTRICT ACCORDING TO CENSUS, 1931

Age group	Unmarried		Married		Widowed	
	Percentage of		Percentage of		Percentage of	
	Males to the total males of the group	Females to the total females of the group	Males to the total males of the group	Females to the total females of the group	Males to the total males of the group	Females to the total females of the group
10-14	89.1	38.1	10.8	59.3	1.1	2.6
15-19	53.6	2.8	45.6	88.1	0.8	9.1
20-29	22.4	0.8	75.5	81.5	2.1	17.7
30-39	5.6	0.2	90.2	63.9	4.2	35.8

The most significant change in course of these thirty years (1931-1961) is the upward movement of age at marriage both for males and females. Of the males 10.8% used to get married between 10 and

14 years of age in 1931 but the corresponding figure for 1961 was only 0.7%. In 1931, 45.6% of males were married when they were between 15 and 19 years of age but in 1961 the corresponding percentage came down to only 10.8. The age group of 20 to 29 claimed 75.5% of married males in 1931 whereas in 1961 the corresponding figure was reduced to 65.05%. In 1931 the majority of women (59.3%) used to be married off immediately on attaining puberty, between the ages of 10 and 14 years. The corresponding figure for 1961 was only 31.6%. These figures, although indicative of an upward movement of the marriageable age of females, also points out that the Sarda Act enforced in 1929 for the prevention of child marriages has had only a limited effect. In 1931 an overwhelming majority of 88.1% of females in the age group of 15-19 used to be married whereas in 1961 the corresponding figure, 84.5%, registered only a slight downward trend.

It should be pointed out that the marriageable age varies from caste to caste, from one tribe to another and even among different religious communities. It also depends on the occupation, economic status and educational attainments of the family. Generally speaking, the educated gentry from the higher castes (*dwija varna*) seem to set the trend in this behalf for the community as a whole. According to the Census of 1931, 39.6% of Muslim and 35.4% of Hindu girls used to get married while in the age group of 5-10 and 75.4% of Muslim and 74% of Hindu girls were married off while in the age group of 10-19. The corresponding percentages among the local tribal people were 10.8% and 53.9% for the respective age groups. These figures reveal at once that child marriages were more common in 1931 among Muslims and Hindus than among the tribals.

When Dalton and Risley studied the Santals towards the end of the 19th century, their women were never given in marriage before they had passed the age of puberty by several years. But with their gradual Hinduization, the Santals began to lower the marriageable age of their women. Simultaneously, respectable and educated Hindus of higher castes began to raise the age of marriage of girls in their families and the Santals, following suit, ceased to think in terms of very early marriages for their daughters and they prefer now to give their women in marriage within four to seven years of their attaining puberty. Risley found both adult and early marriages common among the Bauris with a process of transition from the former to the latter. But due to their close association with the neighbouring Hindus the practice of giving girls very early in their first marriage became a characteristic feature of the Bauri community. The subsequent norms set by the higher-caste Hindus, however, prompted the Bauris to raise the marriageable age of their girls and they are now generally married within two to three years of their attaining puberty. The same is true about the Bagdis. For the

Koras and Khairas there has been no major shift in their age-old traditions; their women usually get married after they have advanced sufficiently into adulthood. Brahmins belonging to the *Rāḍhiya-sreni* and Vaidyas, especially those living in urban areas and employed in white-collar jobs, usually give their womenfolk in marriage now not before they have fully come of age. Brahmins of the same group not in white-collar employments and living in rural areas, prefer their girls to be married within three to seven years of attainment of puberty. Utkala Brahmins, Tilis, Tambulis and Karmakars elect for a still lower age. Artisan castes not within the *Nabasākha* fold show a tendency for a higher marriageable age than the age at puberty preferred by the *Nabasākha* castes.

The age gap between the partners is lowest among the Santals, the Koras, the Khairas and, to some extent, the Lohars. But among these communities as also in the case of caste Hindus the bridegroom in all cases must be older than the bride, at least, in the first marriage. The age gap between the mates once used to be the highest among the Brahmins but it is no longer so particularly among the educated members living in urban areas. It has also considerably closed in among the uneducated Brahmins in rural areas. The gap, however, remains very high among the Muslims and affluent people of the *Nabasākha* castes. which is responsible for the high percentages of widowhood among women of these communities.

Widow re-marriage

Although permitted by law, widow re-marriage does not generally find favour among the *Nabasākha* and upper Hindu castes of the district but it is not accompanied by any such stigma among the lower castes. With the Bauris and Bagdis widow re-marriage is a common practice but the second marriage does not witness such gaieties as go with the first. A Bauri or a Bagdi widow is expected to marry, as her first preference, the younger brother of the deceased husband, if she marries at all. Any other person desirous of marrying her is to pay a certain price to the father-in-law of the woman if she is living in his house or to her father if she is in the household of the latter. Widow re-marriage is also common among the Santals and the Koras. But the second marriage or *sāṅgā* is shorn of amusements and only half of the customary bride-price has to be paid by the groom. A Santal widow is supposed to marry a younger brother of the deceased husband but never any of the elder brothers. Widow marriage is also prevalent among the Muslims. In their case as well, the second marriage or *nikā* is devoid of festivities.

Divorce

Even after the promulgation of the Hindu Marriages Act (1955) and the Special Marriages Act (1954), divorce proceedings are very rare among the higher (including *Nabasākha*) Hindu castes of the district.[1] Except among the Bauris and Bagdis, divorce and re-marriage of

[1] For actual number of divorces under the Indian Divorce Act and the Hindu Marriages Act, see Chapter XI.

divorced women are tabooed. Desertion of wives by their husbands and re-marriage of such husbands used to be more frequent in the past but since bigamy has been prohibited under the Hindu Marriages Act, such practices are now considerably on the wane. Although under the influence of the higher castes, divorce and re-marriage by divorced women do not find much favour now among the relatively affluent Bauris, Bagdis and Lohars, these are still held as valid practices by many of them. Among the Bauris divorce is perhaps the easiest. It is somewhat difficult among the Bagdis, the Lohars and the Doms who have to obtain the prior permission of the caste panchayat in this behalf. If the bridegroom is found to be the aggrieved party, he gets back the bride-price or a portion thereof. No permission from the panchayat is, however, necessary for the re-marriage of either of the separated partners. Among the Santals and the Koras both divorce and re-marriage by the divorcee women are traditionally accepted practices. Divorce is allowed at the instance of either the husband or the wife by the members of the *Mõḍe Hoḍ* (or panchayat). If neither party is at fault, one who asks for the divorce is expected to bear the expenses. The husband in this case would not get any refund of the bride-price he paid during the marriage. If, on the other hand, the wife demands a divorce without a just cause, her father has to make good the bride-price in addition to a fine for her levity of behaviour. Divorce (*tālāq*) and re-marriage by divorcees belonging to both the sexes are common among the Muslims. But the contract of marriage can be annulled by the husband alone by uttering the word *tālāq* thrice in presence of witnesses.

Pre-marital and post-marital relations

Pre-marital sexual relations are tolerated by the Santals, Koras, Bagdis, Bauris and Lohars up to an extent. Such indulgences, practised more widely in the past, find only limited approval now due to the influence of neighbouring Hindu public opinion. But certain Santal festivals are characterized even now by ritual carrying away of the virgins and having sexual relations with them. If conception occurs, the inseminar is bound by custom to marry the girl. No Santal or a Kora would, however, tolerate sexual intimacy between a girl of his tribe and a non-Santal or a non-Kora youth. Bauris and Bagdis have no such bar. Extra-marital sexual relations are tolerated to a certain extent by the Santals but extreme cases are checked either by imposition of social censorship or by divorce as adjudicated by the *Mõḍe Hoḍ*. Extra-marital relations are tolerated to a greater extent by the Bauris and Bagdis.

Polygyny and polyandry

Except among *Kulin* Brahmins, rich landowning Utkala Brahmins, Rajputs, Kshatriyas, Chhatris, rich business-owning Tambulis and Gandhavaniks and Muslims of Bankura, polygyny has always been an infrequent practice. Since the passing of the Hindu Marriages Act, the custom has become practically obsolete

amongst all these communities except the Muslims. Though there is no moral bar against polygyny as such, the lower castes and tribes exhibit little preference for more than one wife at a time. Polyandry is an unknown practice in Bankura unless one chooses, rather arbitrarily, to interpret the system of levirate prevalent among the Santals, Koras, Bhumijs, Bauris and Bagdis as a remnant of once practised polyandry.

Marriage procedure

The customarily accepted mode of contracting a marriage among the Bengali Hindus of the higher castes, including the *Nabasākha* castes, and among most of the *jal-achal* ('non-pure') castes is through negotiations between the male guardians of the prospective bride and bridegroom. Professional *ghaṭaks* (match-makers) or relatives occasionally act as go-betweens but final decisions must always be taken by the respective guardians. The same procedure also obtains among the Muslims of the district.

It is a common practice among higher Hindu castes, including *Nabasākha* castes, to demand dowry (bridegroom price), the payment of which is optional as the legality of the marriage does not depend on it. Neither is the amount to be given customarily fixed; it depends on bargaining between the parties. The hold of the dowry system has not materially slackened although the form might have undergone some change from cash to kind. The custom of husband purchase is rarely found among the Santals. A purchased husband usually comes to the family of his in-laws to serve them with service and to officiate as the father of children not his own. This form of marriage is known as *kiring jāwāe*. Santal boys and girls normally choose their own partners with the approval of their parents and such consent is usually readily given although the details are fixed by negotiations between the guardians concerned. It is only in recent times that certain Santal marriages are being solemnized in the Bengali Hindu fashion without the bride and the groom knowing each other. This form of marriage is known as *bāplā* or *kiring bohu* where the bride has to be purchased by paying a customary price. Santals also practise certain other rare forms of marriage, namely *ghardi jāwāe* which is in lieu of service performed by the bridegroom for five years in his father-in-law's house; *itut*, a form of marriage by capture, undertaken by dashing young men to marry reluctant maids; *nirbolok*, which is the female version of *itut* and *sāṅgā*, prescribed for the widowed and the divorced.

Marriage: under Special & Hindu Marriages Acts

The number of marriages registered in the district during 1964-66 under the Special Marriages Act and the Hindu Marriages Act were as follows:

Year	No. of Special Marriages	No. of Hindu Marriages
1964-65	4	nil
1965-66	12	nil

Dwelling ho uses

A sample survey of 20 per cent of the total number of households in the district was carried out during the 1961 Census. The results, tabulated in the two statements below, throw significant light on the economic conditions of the people as revealed from the relative use of various construction materials for building of walls and roofs of houses.

POLICE STATIONWISE DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLING HOUSES IN BANKURA DISTRICT ACCORDING TO MATERIALS USED FOR BUILDING THE WALLS

(Based on a 20% sample of total number of houses: according to the 1961 Census)

Name of police station	Grass, leaves, reeds or bamboo	Mud	Burnt bricks	C.I. sheets or other metal sheets	Cement concrete
Bankura	0.08	74.00	25.00	0.50	0.40
Onda	nil	93.00	6.99	nil	0.04
Chhatna	nil	85.70	13.40	nil	nil
Gangajalghati	nil	94.20	4.10	0.09	0.09
Barjora	0.79	94.00	5.20	nil	0.04
Mejia	nil	80.40	19.00	0.2	nil
Saltora	nil	93.20	6.00	nil	nil
Khatra	0.09	95.59	4.11	0.04	0.03
Indpur	0.05	91.93	7.78	0.05	nil
Ranibandh	0.27	99.20	0.36	0.06	nil
Raipur	0.99	97.49	1.80	0.23	0.11
Simlapal	0.03	97.73	2.15	0.03	0.03
Taldangra	0.08	95.39	2.80	0.28	nil
Vishnupur	0.04	89.81	12.70	nil	0.62
Joypur	0.75	97.53	1.57	nil	0.14
Kotulpur	0.35	98.68	0.97	nil	0.04
Sonamukhi	1.64	88.10	1.13	nil	0.03
Patrasayer	2.27	94.09	3.40	0.05	nil
Indas	0.60	98.00	1.34	nil	0.04

TOWNWISE DISTRIBUTION

Name of town					
Bankura	nil	44.90	54 41	0.04	0.31
Vishnupur	nil	67.89	31.20	nil	0.87
Sonamukhi	0.20	68.00	31.78	nil	nil

POLICE STATIONWISE DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLING HOUSES IN BANKURA DISTRICT ACCORDING TO MATERIALS USED FOR BUILDING THE ROOFS

(Based on a 20% sample of the total number of houses: according to the 1961 Census)

Name of police station	Grass, leaves, reeds, wood or bamboo	Tiles, slates, shingles	C.I. sheets or other metal sheets	Asbestos cement sheets	Brick and mortar	Reinforced concrete or stone slabs
Bankura	69.0	4.0	9.5	1.1	5.9	12.6
Onda	86.9	0.1	8.1	0.3	0.8	3.2
Chhatna	89.0	2.0	5.9	0.09	0.3	0.4
Gangajalghati	88.1	1.1	5.7	0.01	0.7	0.9
Barjora	84.8	1.2	11.2	0.07	0.8	1.7
Mejia	80.4	1.5	8.5	nil	3.9	5.6
Saltora	87.8	3.2	6.3	nil	0.09	2.5
Khatra	92.4	0.1	5.1	0.7	0.1	1.5
Indpur	90.7	1.1	6.0	0.01	0.3	1.6
Ranibandh	96.8	0.5	2.4	nil	0.09	0.2
Raipur	94.7	0.4	3.6	0.09	0.06	0.9
Simlapal	89.5	0.2	8.7	0.08	0.2	1.0
Taldangra	91.7	0.4	6.5	nil	0.1	1.0
Vishnupur	73.9	0.2	16.1	0.8	1.7	5.8
Joypur	86.4	0.3	12.4	nil	0.02	0.8
Kotulpur	88.0	0.2	11.3	nil	0.02	0.4
Sonamukhi	82.9	1.7	8.8	0.09	1.5	4.5
Patrasayer	88.2	0.6	6.9	0.2	0.8	1.7
Indas	91.3	0.04	7.0	0.7	0.3	0.4

TOWNWISE DISTRIBUTION

Name of town						
Bankura	4.3	3.2	12.8	2.2	7.7	30.3
Vishnupur	48.9	0.3	10.4	1.3	2.8	16.0
Sonamukhi	59.3	5.2	13.8	0.2	5.8	14.2

It will be seen that an overwhelming majority of dwelling houses in the district have walls made of mud. The percentage of houses with mud walls is lowest in P.S. Bankura due to the fact that the headquarters town falls within the jurisdiction of this thana. But even there the percentage of houses with mud walls is as high as 44.9. In P.S. Vishnupur the percentage of mud-walled houses is as

high as 89.81 and brick-built walls account for only 12.70 per cent of the dwelling houses. Within the boundaries of the Vishnupur municipality the percentage of houses with mud walls is 67.89, while houses with brick-built walls account for only 31.20 per cent of the total number of houses. The number of dwelling houses with walls made of grass, leaves, reeds, wood or bamboo is not particularly large throughout the district. The highest percentage of houses having cement concrete walls is to be found in P.S. Vishnupur. Next comes Bankura. Since both these thanas have sizable towns within their boundaries, it is reasonable to assume that the houses with cement concrete walls are all located within the towns.

All over the district vegetative materials are extensively used for roofing purposes. In fact, roofs made of such simple materials far outnumber nearly everywhere the roofs made of all other ingredients taken together except in the town of Bankura. Even in Vishnupur and Sonamukhi, the two other municipal towns in the district, vegetative roof covers hold their own. Corrugated iron sheets constitute the second most important substance for roofing purposes. But in the police stations where incidence of the use of C.I. sheets is the highest, as in P.S. Vishnupur, the percentage of houses with such roofs is much less than that of houses with roofs made of vegetative materials. Use of pottery tiles, slates, shingles and asbestos cement sheets for construction of roofs is not much prevalent in the district.

Use of brick and mortar or of cement concrete as roofing materials is indicative of the economic prosperity of the users. It should, however, be pointed out that the use of cement concrete is only a recent phenomenon, particularly among the affluent classes, who are taking to its use in preference to the old-time brick and mortar for its relative durability.

Ground plans of houses, almost irrespective of their locale or building materials, are rectangular in shape with minimum of backward or forward projections. With bamboo and straw as the chief ingredients of the thatch cover, a particular form of hut has, from long use and perfection, come to stay in this part of the Rāḍh country to which Bankura belongs. Usually, two or four thatches with convexilinear tops, drooping corner joints and curvilinear lower edges, constructed with hay spread over bamboo frames, are mounted on two or four of the mud walls, as the case may be, and joined together at the top. When only two thatches are used, the structure is called a *do-chālā*; with four it becomes a *chār-chālā*. When a *chār-chālā* is vertically repeated on a slightly smaller scale to cover a second storey, the resultant hut is known as an *āṭ-chālā* as eight separate thatches go into its construction. A *bāra-chālā* structure with twelve thatches to cover three storeys is rather rare. This mode of roof construction has so influenced the local style in

this region that even C.I. sheets are wielded to conform to this form. It is only in the deep interior of the district that dissimilar structures are noticed which are used by indigent people; otherwise, the standard huts described above are more or less universal throughout the district. Poorer Bauris, Bagdis, Lohars, Koras and Khairas are sometimes found to live in huts constructed with leaves and other assorted vegetative materials.

Houses in a Bankura village are grouped together, more often than not, according to the castes and occupations of their owners. Poorer *jal-achal* castes live in relative isolation from the central cluster occupied usually by the higher castes and form groups of their own. Santal villages are mostly of a linear type with houses facing each other along a central road or along lanes branching off from the main thoroughfare. In fact, the linear type of village lay-out is fairly common in Bankura with a central road forming the axis of the settlement. The facades of Santal huts are often decorated with multi-coloured frescos displaying stylized floral, animal or geometrical motifs.

Dress for males

The principal item of the traditional dress worn by Bengali males belonging to the *dwija varna* and *Nabasākha* castes and engaged in non-manual occupations is a dhoti; it is worn round the waist with a pleated formation in front called the *konchā* and another at the rear called the *kāchhā*. No undergarment used to be worn previously with a dhoti but town-bred young men now usually wear a sewn one underneath. The *chāddar*, another piece of unsewn cloth of smaller width, once used to be regarded as the only proper garment for draping the upper part of the male body but it has largely lost its use now except among the traditionally minded. The English-style shirt has now been adopted by all classes and castes as a useful piece of dress. Many of the educated and well-to-do people of urban areas prefer the *pānjābi* as an upper garment which is a sewn apparel without collars and of very loose proportions. *Fatuā*, an undergarment for the upper part of the male body, is being increasingly replaced by hosiery vests.

In the rural areas it is normally not customary to wear anything for the upper part of the body except in winter when a *chāddar* is usually worn. Urban working people, however, use hosiery vests or English-style shirts as upper garments. The poorer sections of the people wear very short pieces of coarse cloth which are an apology for dhotis. They usually go bare-bodied but carry a *gāmchhā* or an all-purpose thin towel tied to their waists or slung from their shoulders which, when occasion demands, also serves as an upper garment. On festive occasions or while making long journeys, such people occasionally use hosiery vests or even shirts.

Muslim males of Bankura, irrespective of social standing, use coloured *lungis* which are single-piece cloths with the vertical ends

sewn up for covering the lower part of the body. Most of them wear white pyjamas on ceremonial occasions and during religious festivals. The progressive among them have, of late, been showing a tendency to don the dhoti in Hindu fashion when undertaking long journeys, attending mass meetings or rehearsing to play leadership roles. As regards the upper garment, the practices followed by the Muslims hardly differ from those followed by the rest of the population.

Among the Hindus, irrespective of caste and class as among the Ādivāsis of Bankura, there is no use of any sort of head gear. Muslims use simple cloth caps during prayers and on religious occasions. The well-to-do classes in rural areas are gradually taking to the use of footwear which is increasingly becoming a necessity for them. The bulk of the rural population, however, goes barefooted.

Dress for females

Irrespective of class, caste and status, a Bengali Hindu woman's dress formerly used to be the sari, which draped both the upper and lower parts of her body. The texture and measurements varied with the social and economic status of the wearers. Supplementary garments like the petticoat, the blouse or the brassiere are recent adoptions chiefly of the well-to-do classes. Married or unmarried Hindu Ādivāsi and Muslim women usually prefer coloured saris with coloured borders while elderly married women use white saris with wide borders. Widows belonging to the upper Hindu castes wear white saris without borders called *thāns* in accordance with conventional practice. Although the Muslim and Ādivāsi widows are subject to no such compulsion, the elderly among them show a preference for white *thāns*. The *chāddar* once used to serve as an upper garment as also for covering the head. Elderly women of upper classes still use the *chāddar* on formal occasions.

Fairs and festivals

A detailed enumeration of the various fairs and festivals held in the district with their respective locations, description of the nature of observances, the time of the year when they are held, their duration and the size of the gatherings attending them was made during the 1951 Census. The elaborate list covering some 201 fairs and festivals is not reproduced here as it is readily available in another official publication.[1]

The Gājan festival held in honour of Siva is by far the most popular and important of the celebrations inasmuch as 117 of the 201 observances mentioned in the list referred to above relate to it. Most of the Gājan festivals coincide with the Chaḍak or the hook-swinging festivals held in mid-April during the closing week of *Chaitra*, the last month of the Bengali year. Occasionally, the Gājan of Siva is held in other times of the year. For instance, in the village of Kāmārkuli in P. S. Chhatna, the festival is held during the month of *Baisākh* (the first month of the Bengali year: mid-April to mid-

[1] Census 1951, West Bengal District Handbooks: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. pp. 178-79.

May). Rites associated with the Gājan of Siva differ little from those observed during the Gājan of Dharma described in Appendix A to this chapter. The pattern of rituals is more or less the same everywhere and the detail may be gathered from the entries on Ekteswar and Pānchāl in the chapter on Places of Interest.

The next most important festival is the Gājan held in honour of Dharmarāj. Among the important Dharma deities of the district are Briddhāksha of Sānkhāripārā in Vishnupur town, Bānkurā Rāy of Indas in the police station of the same name and Jātrāsiddhi Rāy of Maynāpur in Joypur police station. The annual festivals of all these deities are held during the Bengali months of *Āshāḍh* (mid-June to mid-July) or *Srāban* (mid-July to mid-August) but similar celebrations relating to Swarupnārāyan in the village of Gābpur, Nabajiban in the village of Bālsi and Rupnārāyan of the village Mangalpur are held on the Makar-Sankrānti day which is the last day of the Bengali month of *Paush* (mid-January). An exceptional instance is provided by the annual festival of Dharmarāj held in the village of Maṭgodā which starts on the last Saturday of the Bengali month of *Māgh* (1st or 2nd week of February). One of the most important Gājans held in the district in honour of Dharmarāj has been described in details in the entry entitled Beliātore in the chapter on Places of Interest and the pattern of connected rituals has been set forth in Appendix A annexed to this chapter. Most of the Gājans of Siva and Dharmarāj are accompanied by local fairs, large or small.

The festival of Makar-Snānjātrā, which falls in the last day of the Bengali month of *Paush* (mid-January) occasions a number of fairs, the most important of which are held at Pārkul in P.S. Khatra, Gourberyā in P.S. Barjora and Gorāsole in P.S. Onda. The Makar-Saptami Melā of the village Pākhannā in P.S. Barjora is held during the first week of February. Makar-Snānjātrā usually coincides with *Paush Sankrānti*, and in places away from rivers where ritual bathings cannot be observed, it is held without its bathing component.

Dol Purnimā celebrated on the full moon day of the Bengali month of *Phālgun* (February-March), marks the observance of Holi (the spring festival) symbolically indulged in by the divine lovers Rādhā and Krishna. It occasions big fairs at Brajarājpur in P.S. Indpur, Rudra in P.S. Ranibandh, Simlapal and Bhālaidihā in P.S. Simlapal and Nandarbāni and Chandrakonā in P.S. Onda.

The Rās festival stemming from the conjugal piety of Rādhā and Krishna occasions fairs in Vishnupur town and Tāljhaṭkā village in P.S. Gangajalghati. The biggest of the fairs held on the occasion is in the village of Sābrākon in P.S. Taldangra.

The Rathajātrā or the car-festival of Krishna, Balarām and Subhadrā, held during the Bengali month of *Āshāḍh* (mid-June to mid-July), occasions fairs and festivals in a number of places in the

district of which the most important is held during the car's return journey (Ulṭorath) in Vishnupur town which is marked by a quaint custom. The day traditionally witnesses a strong ritual rivalry between the devotees of Madangopāl of Mādhabganj (or Egārapārā) and the devotees of Lālji of Krishnaganj (or Bāispārā). The processions of the deities over, the opposite groups assemble near the common border of the two localities at Āisbāzār at midnight and hurl dust, mud and brickbats at each other with the accompaniment of drums and trumpets and slander the deity of the opposite group. Formerly, there used to be free fights between the rival parties in their attempt to penetrate forcibly into the domain of the opposite group resulting in bloodshed and physical injuries. In recent times, heavy police patrolling prevents such incidents. Both the parties make elaborate preparation for the day. They hire elephants, horses etc. to add to the grandeur of their performance and people of both the localities contribute lavishly to the fund raised for the purpose. On the following morning, however, they show no signs of bitterness and exchange usual social greetings. A similar rivalry, although on a much smaller scale, takes place between the inhabitants of Gopālpur and Tejpāl situated on the suburbs of Vishnupur. During the Manasāpujā festival the two groups face each other and fight whenever the chance arises.

Among other important fairs of the district are the Mahatsol Melā of Birsingā in P.S. Patrasayer held in *Baisākh* (April-May), Bāsantipuja Melā of Jāmkuri in the same P.S. held in *Chaitra* (March-April), Monohardāsṭhākurer Melā of Sonāmukhi town held in the month of *Phālgun* (February-March),[1] Bāruni-Snānjātrā Melā of Krishnanagar in P.S. Barjora held in March, Rāmnavami Melā of Bhūiphore in P.S. Gangajalghati held in April and Dasaharā Melā of Nārāyansundari in P.S. Sonamukhi held in June.

Among the predominantly Ādivāsi festivals attended with fairs, the following are important: Ind-parab, or the festival connected with the setting up of an Indradhwaja (the flag-post of Indra, the king of gods) is a Bhumij festival in its origin. People belonging to other tribes and *jal-achal* Hindu castes also participate in it. Ind-parab held at Khatra on the 17th of *Bhādra* (1st week of September) each year draws large crowds. A big fair is held on the occasion of the Ṭusu-parab, another intrinsically Bhumij festival, at the village-Budhkhilā in P.S. Ranibandh in the 4th week of February. Bāthoniā Melā, a Santal festival in its origin, occasions a big fair in Mejia in May attended by people belonging to other communities as well. The annual hunting festival of the Santals, participated in by the Koras as well, is now held only as a token in the month of *Baisākh* in the Susunia hills.

[1] For a detailed description of this fair, see entry 'Sonamukhi' in the chapter on Places of Interest.

APPENDIX A

DHARMA AND SERPENT WORSHIP IN BANKURA DISTRICT

BY

ASUTOSH BHATTACHARYA*

Dharma worship

Over a vast area of West Bengal among almost all sections of the Hindus there is prevalent a religious cult known as the Dharma cult which is not confined to the observance of a set of sectarian rituals only, but has also entered deep into the social life of the people in many ways. Moreover, it is not confined to any particular section of the society. Originating, as it does, in the lowest stratum of society (as will be found in the following discussion), it has not only reached its uppermost layers in course of time but its influence is felt even beyond the pale of Hindu society—the illiterate Muslims and the artless Ādivāsis living in this area observe some of its rituals along with their Hindu neighbours. At some period in history the elements of Hinduism were imported from outside and, as such, they failed to strike deep roots, but the Dharma cult, originating in this area and incorporating into itself local elements, acquired a vital force and hold. As a result more importance is attached to Dharma worship in certain places in this region than to the worship of the goddess Durga.

It is not, however, a fact that the cult is prevalent all over western Bengal. Its area of influence can be outlined in the following way. In the north it is limited by the northern boundary of Birbhum district, in the east by the river Bhāgirathi, in the south by the Ghātāl subdivision and the north of the Sadar subdivision of Midnapur district and in the west by Purulia district and the western border of Birbhum district. In the early history of Bengal this area was known as Rāḍh. It is over this area that the Dharma cult holds sway with all its characteristics intact, though it has also been diffused to some extent in adjoining areas. Though the Dharma cult has not spread beyond the area specified, the name Dharma, in a different sense, is recognized practically throughout Bengal. In East Bengal by Dharma is generally meant Siva and in North Bengal it means Siva as well as some preceptor of the Nāth community. The set of rituals which developed along with the cult in West Bengal is unknown both in East and North Bengal.

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The cult is not uniformly strong over the entire area of its prevalence. In regions which have been subject to the spell of Hinduism, the cult has been appreciably influenced by Hinduism. It is only over the areas in which Hindu influence has not been so effective that the cult retains its original character to a very great extent. At one time, certain parts of the above area, the one covered by the present district of Bankura in particular, were subject to the influence of Buddhism and Jainism and the Dharma cult came under the influence of both these higher religions there. It is not a fact that Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism were prevalent over the above area at the same time. Had it been so, the Dharma cult would have been influenced by one particular religion only in one area. But it appears to have been influenced successively by all these three higher religions. If we analyse today the constituent elements of the Dharma cult, we find that over and above the original traits of the cult there are certain other factors which have been eventually borrowed from Buddhism and Hinduism. They have been so assimilated into it that it is now difficult to recognize their original characters.

Dharma Ṭhākur or Dharmarāj Ṭhākur has no anthropomorphic form; he is not, therefore, worshipped in the form of any image. A piece of natural crude stone represents the deity. Sometimes more than one piece of stone is worshipped. The number three is preferred. Sometimes iron nails are stuck into the piece of stone and they are explained as the eyes of the deity. People suffering from eye-diseases take a vow that they would offer 'eyes' to the deity on recovery. When the prayer is answered, the deity is propitiated with the promised offering.[1] Over those parts of the area mentioned where the influence of Puranic Hinduism has been very effective. the piece of stone representing the deity is explained as tortoise-shaped and, as such, it is identified with Vishnu of the Hindu Trinity, because Vishnu appeared in the form of a tortoise in one of his incarnations. But as a matter of fact the stone representations of Dharma Ṭhākur are not shaped as tortoises by any human hand. As has been already stated, they are pieces of crude stones picked up in their natural forms. They are generally oval, triangular or conical in shape and have no fixed form. Sometimes abandoned and broken images of Hindu or Jain gods are utilized as a representation of Dharma Ṭhākur. For example, the Dharma Ṭhākur worshipped in the village of Bele in the district

[1] There are many deities known by the name of Dharmarāj in various parts of Bankura, but the most ancient is said to be Briddhāksha, who is enshrined at Sānkhāripārā in the town of Vishnupur. The name Briddhāksha means the 'old-eyed one' and the god, who is also commonly known as Buḍā Dharma, is represented by a piece of stone covered with vermilion and having metal eyes. The priests are a family of Karmakāras or blacksmiths known as *Dharma Pandits* and the offerings consist of unboiled rice and sugar. Such offerings are made even by Brahmins.

of Birbhum is represented by the lower half of a broken Hindu stone image. Therefore, Dharma Ṭhākur is addressed by the worshipping priests as multi-formed (*vahurupa*). Among the tribals of Chotanagpur and Orissa the deity is addressed as Dharmesh or Dharam Deotā signifying the sun whom they worship as their supreme god. They have no image nor any symbol to represent the god to whom they offer their prayers directly.

Generally these deities are installed at the foot of any tree, which is about the only place where the common villagers worship them. Except when invocations are necessitated, nobody pays any attention to the deity. But during droughts, the villagers offer communal prayers. When a person suffers from a chronic and incurable disease, worship is also offered individually in the hope of recovery. Sometimes a silent vow is taken to this effect and the worship is offered after fulfilment of the desire. If the recovered person is rich, he sometimes builds a shrine at his own cost for accommodation of the deity. This shrine may be built of mud or brick according to the circumstances of the devotee. Over the area in which there has been considerable Hindu influence, the deity is sometimes installed in houses and worshipped as a family idol; Brahmin priests are then engaged for his daily service. Notwithstanding this fact, unorthodox offerings are sometimes made to the deity. In the village of Khudkuri in Burdwan district (J.L. No. 69, P.S. Khandaghosh) there is a tutelary Dharma Ṭhākur in the house of one Āguri (Ugra-Kshatriya). The deity is worshipped daily by a Brahmin priest with the offering of one seer of parboiled rice instead of sun-dried rice. Needless to say, the Brahmin priest has practically identified the stone representation of Dharma with Sālagrām, the stone symbol of the Hindu god Vishnu.

Each Dharma slab worshipped in a village has got a distinct name of its own. An author (who belonged to the district of Bankura) of a narrative folk poem known as *Dharma Mangal* written in the 17th century in glorification of the divinity mentions the different names and places in the following way. (Almost all the Dharma deities mentioned by him come from different parts of his home district).

"First I adore the Supreme Being. He has various forms at various places for the sake of the extension of his glory and greatness. I adore Bānkurā Rāy of Beldihā with single-minded devotion. I offer endless obeisance at the feet of Sital Singha. I adore the two—Phate Singha of Phullar and Bānkurā Rāy of Baital with a pure mind and prostrate limbs. I respectfully adore Buḍā Dharma of Pāndugrām and Dalu Rāy of Syāmbāzār. I salute Jagat Rāy of Depur with folded palms and then I adore Kānkḍābichhā of Gopālpur. I adore with profound veneration Kālāchānd of Siyās and Bankura Rāy of Indās. After saluting Swarupnārāyan of Gopur who is seated on a golden throne, I adore Rupnārāyan of Mangalpur. I shall adore

Mohan Rāy of village Bedujā after I have paid my respects to Jātrāsiddhi of Paschimpāḍā. I adore Sital Nārāyan of Guchuḍā and also Khudi Rāy of Ālgurichunnā carefully. Singing the praises of Malla Dharma of Ākuṭikullā, I adore Syām Rāy of Bandipur. I salute now Kālu Rāy with attendants at Jaḍagrām, and finally I adore with a steadfast mind the Dharma temple of Jājpur."

Sometimes the deities of different villages are supposed to be related to each other as brothers. Thus the Dharma Ṭhākur of the village Purandarpur in the district of Birbhum is said to be the 'eldest brother' of similar deities in the neighbouring villages. On a certain day in the year, the 'younger brothers' come out in procession from their respective villages to meet their 'eldest brother'. The ceremonial meeting takes place in the open air.

Unlike the gods of the Hindu pantheon, Dharma Ṭhākur is considered as a positive force. Barren women offer their prayers to Dharma Ṭhākur in order that they may be blessed with children. In many places it is also believed that the worship of Dharma during a period of drought will precipitate rain. In village Khudkuri of Burdwan district, the Dharma slab, which is worshipped by the Āguris as their tutelary deity, is brought out from his mud hut in the mid-day sun as a measure of punishment inflicted on him at a time of severe drought. It is believed that this ensures an immediate shower. In the village known as Damrā (J.L. No. 41, P.S. Asansol), adjacent to Asansol in Burdwan, the deity is pacified with special offerings so that there may be rain. Over the area influenced by later Hinduism, Dharma Ṭhākur is worshipped as a deity curing leprosy. People take vows to worship the deity in order to be rid of rheumatism and eye-troubles also. He is worshipped besides to prevent the birth of still-born children.

Animal sacrifice is an invariable adjunct to the worship of Dharma. In the region influenced by Hinduism, it is usual now to sacrifice a goat, but as recently as fifty years ago fowls and swine used to be sacrificed to the deity. Originally, it was the custom to sacrifice a white goat, but nowadays no hard and fast rule is observed with regard to the colour of the animal. At Beliātore in the district of Bankura, where there is an old temple of Dharma Ṭhākur, white-coloured goats and pigeons are still sacrificed to the deity. In the Hindu-influenced area, the deity is presented with clay horses which are considered the proper mount of the god. Large numbers of clay horses can be seen in any place of Dharma worship which are periodically replaced to make room for the new offerings. The practice of offering clay horses to Dharma Ṭhākur has spread to other local deities as well.

The priests of Dharma Ṭhākur should be Doms though nowadays they sometimes hail also from the Hāḍi, Kaivarta and similar castes of the lowest stratum of the present Hindu community. The Dom priests of Dharma Ṭhākur take the surname of Pundit. Other new-

comers to this profession also take identical surnames. In a village where Brahmins predominate either economically or numerically, Brahmin priests are also engaged along with Doms in order to conduct the worship. Sometimes while the Doms carry on the worship throughout the year, Brahmin priests are engaged only on special occasions. The annual worship is conducted in most places jointly by Brahmins and Doms or other Scheduled Caste priests. These Doms are known as Bengali Doms as distinguished from Maghāiyā or Turi Doms of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It is with the Bengali Doms that Dharma worship is an essential religious duty; the Doms of other parts of North India have nothing to do with it.

The lower caste priest-cum-supervisors of Dharma shrines are known as *Deyāsis* or *Dyāsis* often Sanskritized into *Devāṁsis*, meaning "part and parcel of the deity". But the word seems to have an etymological relation with the Marathi word *Desāi* which denotes a headman 'who may be said in a manner to correspond to a Justice of the Peace'. The *Deyāsis* also administer various quack remedies in the name of the deity. Over the Hindu-influenced area the Brahmin priest and the lower-caste *Deyāsi* perform distinct and separate functions—the Brahmin offers worship to the deity and the *Deyāsi* administers quack medicines to the public.

In former times, Dom priests used to be ceremonially initiated to the priesthood of Dharma Ṭhākur. As a mark of initiation they used to put on a copper fillet and a copper ring on their persons. Nowadays this practice is seldom observed. Nobody other than a Dom undergoes any initiation.

The worship of Dharma Ṭhākur is performed in the three following ways. In a family in which the deity is installed as a tutelary god, daily worship is offered generally by Brahmin priests with extremely simple rites. There are no codified rituals for such worship which depends on the traditions followed by each individual family. No animal is sacrificed, though on special occasions additional food-offerings are made. But if a vow has been taken for the well-being of a member of the family, a goat or a pigeon is sacrificed to Dharma Ṭhākur in furtherance of the desire. Daily worship is performed twice a day. Firstly, the deity is ceremonially awakened from its bed in the morning and given a ritual bath and food-offerings are then made—all the observances being performed by a competent priest. In the evening, the deity, after an occasional food-offering, is ceremonially placed in its bed for the night. From the above account it would appear that the religious services correspond to a very great extent to the worship of Sālagrām in a Hindu household. Sometimes Dharma Ṭhākur is unequivocally identified with Sālagrām which is supposed to be a form of Vishnu.

In villages which have a permanent shrine for the deity and have provision for it, worship is offered every day. These shrines are

attended almost daily by villagers, who, in fulfilment of their vows, come and make their promised offerings. Goats and pigeons are generally sacrificed and a share of the oblations and other ingredients of worships goes to the priests and the *Deyāsīs*. These shrines have also their permanent endowments in land donated by high caste Hindu zeminders who usually have a hand in the matter of nomination of the priests and their assistants. As a result, lower caste Dom priests have in many places been ousted by Brahmins. But in Bankura and Midnapur Dom priests are still found to co-operate with the Brahmin interlopers. Daily worship is not, however, held in a village unless it is sufficiently prosperous and populous.

Next comes the annual worship. Such an observance is not held in respect of tutelary or family deities though special worship is occasionally offered to them. Annual worships are held only of those deities who are the property of the whole village (*bārowārī*: lit. belonging to many) and not of any individual householder. Expensive and pompous yearly celebrations are always held of a *bārowārī* Dharma Ṭhākur who is supposed to be responsible for the well-being of the entire village community. But unless there is a permanent shrine with some landed property attached to it, no annual celebration is held because of the expenses which are beyond the reach of the villagers.

The Dharma shrine, which remains uncared for for the rest of the year, becomes the centre of attraction a fortnight ahead of the day scheduled for the annual worship which is held on any full moon day between the months of Chaitra (March-April) and Āshāḍh (June-July) or during the months of drought. Every village has a tradition of its own in this respect. There is a wrong impression among some scholars that this yearly festival is held on the full moon day of the month of Baisākh (April-May), the sacred birthday of Buddha. Though it is a fact that the largest number of worships is held on this day, no uniform practice appears to be followed in this behalf. The number of celebrations held on the full moon day of the month of Āshāḍh (June-July) is negligible. But at Beliatore, containing one of the most important Dharma shrines of Bankura district, the annual worship is held on the full moon day of the month of Āshāḍh. Every village seems to have its own traditions with regard to the observance of these rituals and they are scrupulously adhered to in most places. But disintegration of rural life, economic distress and various other local factors have now slackened the enthusiasm of villagers in holding these performances strictly according to custom. Even then certain common attributes have been retained in almost every village to this day. I can mention here only two; first, the ceremonial bath of Dharma Ṭhākur, and, secondly, the idea of potency of the deity in removing the barrenness of childless women. There are again certain features

characteristic of the annual Dharma worship in Birbhum and Bankura districts. In most places country-made wine is offered to the deity in this connexion and the *Bhaktyās* (devotees) make an elaborate display of playing with fire including walking on burning coal or cinders.

The third form of Dharma Puja is known as *Gharbharā* which has now become almost obsolete. It is a very expensive affair and requires a large number of participants. It is held over a period of twelve days. Two detailed accounts of *Gharbharā* held in Midnapur and Bankura districts have already been published[1] to which the interested reader is referred for further information.

Along with the development of the Dharma cult in the area mentioned above, there grew up a very rich folk literature known as the *Dharma Mangal* ballads which made a distinct contribution to mediaeval Bengali narrative poetry and were mainly responsible for attracting the attention of scholars to this cult at a time when the study of popular religion and literature in this country was still in its infancy. *Dharma Mangal* is considered as the 'national poetry' of the Rāḍh country or the area covered by the Dharma cult. It has incorporated in it the history, mythology, traditions, folklore, beliefs and superstitions of the above area and, as such, it possesses an especial value. The theme of *Dharma Mangal*,[2] extolling in great details the life and activities of Lāusen, its hero, and his final triumph against heavy odds with the blessings of Dharma Ṭhākur, is ceremonially recited in narrative song in twenty-four sittings, two on each day, in the course of the twelve days of the celebration of *Gharbharā* mentioned above.

Over the last fifty years the identity of Dharma Ṭhākur has been puzzling scholars notwithstanding the fact that the cult is one of the most developed forms of popular religion over the area described. The late Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Sāstri, to whom goes the credit of opening the discussion on this interesting and useful subject, came to the definite conclusion that Dharma Ṭhākur was none other than Buddha, and "the Dharma puja prevalent in West Bengal is Buddhism." He contributed more than half a dozen valuable papers written in English and Bengali to establish his theory. As a result of his persistent researches, his finding has been most popular with the general reader, and even today it is generally believed that Dharma Ṭhākur is Buddha in disguise. S. C. Ray, the anthropologist, supposed that "in ancient Hindu

[1] K. P. Chattopadhyay—'Dharma Worship' in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. VIII (1942), pp. 99-135 and Basanta Kumar Chattopadhyay—*Mayurbhaṭṭer Sri Dharma Purān*. Calcutta, 1931. Appendix.

[2] For a detailed account of the *Dharma Mangal* story see Asutosh Bhattacharya's monograph on 'Dharma Worship in West Bengal' published in the Tribes and Castes of West Bengal (A. Mitra—Ed.), Census, 1951. Calcutta, 1953. pp. 353-58.

literature, the name Dharma is applied to the sun." He was, therefore, under the impression that Dharma was none other than the sun, an important member of the Hindu pantheon. S. K. Chatterjee, the linguist, supposes that the name Dharma is a Sanskritized form of some lost Austro-Asiatic (Kol-Munda) word meaning tortoise, and the Dharma cult, according to him, is in some way or other related to a supposed tortoise-cult.[1] K. P. Chattopadhyay, however, supposes that Dharma is a later development of the Vedic god Varuna who used to be propitiated with human sacrifices.[2] According to him the *Loue* (white) goat which is sacrificed at the *Gharbharā* celebration is the modern substitute for the erstwhile human victim. The priests who worship the deity to this day are also no less confused than the scholars themselves about its identity. They confuse it with Vishnu, Yama (the king of the dead), Siva and Surya (the sun). Due to this indefiniteness of his character he is sometimes invoked as *vahurupa* or multiform.

The views propagated by the late Mahāmahopādhyāya Sāstri gave rise to serious controversy even among his contemporaries but none took the trouble of investigating the matter independently in order to find out the truth. In the absence of an alternative theory, the late Mahāmahopādhyāya's view gained strength for some time. But recent investigations have minimized the value of his contentions to a very great extent.

One of the main arguments in support of the theory of Dharma being Buddha is that Dharma worship is held on the "sacred birthday of Buddha" or the full moon day of the Bengali month of Baisākh (April-May). But later researches definitely showed that it is not only on the "sacred birthday of Buddha" or the full moon day of the Bengali month of Baisākh that the Dharma worship is held, but it is celebrated on any of the four full moon days beginning from the Bengali month of Chaitra and ending with the Bengali month of Āshāḍh corresponding to the entire season of drought. In the aforesaid discussions it has been noticed that there are certain rites in it which are nothing but magic observances to induce rain, and as such, it is essentially a ceremony of the summer months. Accordingly, on the full moon days of the two months of summer, Baisākh and Jyaisṭha, the worship is held in most of the places. H. H. Risley noted more than half a century ago that the Doms of West Bengal worshipped Dharam or Dharmaraj "on the last day of Jyaisṭha." It is thus obvious that the date of the annual worship of Dharma Ṭhākur has nothing to do with "the sacred birthday of Buddha".

In a paper entitled *Sri-Dharma-Mangala:* A Distant Echo of *Lalita-vistāra*, the late Mahāmahopādhyāya Sāstri attempted a

[1] B. C. Law Commemoration Volume-I. Calcutta, 1945. pp. 79-80.
[2] Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. VIII (1942). pp. 132-33.

comparison between *Sri-Dharma-Mangala*, 'the handbook of the Dharma-worshippers' and *Lalita-vistāra*, 'the handbook of Buddha's life according to the Mahāyāna School' and pointed out certain resemblances between the character of Lāusen, the hero of *Dharma Mangal* and Buddha, the hero of *Lalita-vistāra*. K. P. Chattopadhyay has very ably refuted this theory. He says "the resemblance is not however very great and the similarity may be due to borrowing of details from one mythological tale by another without the necessity of equating Buddha with Dharma. If any equation is justifiable then Lausen has to be equated to the hero of *Lalita-vistāra*, which leaves the question at issue unsolved. But a detailed examination does not justify any such identification. For example, Lausen's mother sacrifices herself in order to get a son and is again brought back to life. Buddha's mother dies within a few days after the birth of her son. The two circumstances are quite different."[1]

Mahāmahopādhyāya Sāstri also did not explain why Dharma worship, which according to him was a decadent form of Buddhism, should be confined to a particular region of Bengal alone. If Buddhism really culminated in the worship of Dharma Ṭhākur in Bengal then it should have been extant in Tippera and Chittagong which were the last refuge of Buddhism in this country.

I have already stated that S. C. Ray, the anthropologist, supposed that "in ancient Hindu literature the name Dharma is applied to the Sun." Though from the following discussion it will be seen that Dharma Ṭhākur is undoubtedly the sun yet in ancient Hindu literature the sun is never known as Dharma as has been supposed by the eminent anthropologist. In Sanskrit literature Dharmarāja is the name of Yama, the king of the dead, and also of Buddha but not of the sun.

The supposition of S. K. Chatterjee, the philologist, that the word Dharma has been derived from some Austro-Asiatic word of the Kol-Munda family meaning tortoise and that Dharma cult must have stemmed from a tortoise-cult are hardly supported by the existing facts. Dharma Ṭhākur came to be associated with the tortoise at a much later date in certain localities only when the idea of the deity came under the influence of the Hindu Purānas in those areas. According to the Puranic tradition, the tortoise is among the ten incarnations of Vishnu with whom Dharma Ṭhākur came to be identified by the higher class Hindus and over the area where Hindu influence predominated the crude stone representation of Dharma Ṭhākur began to be explained as tortoise-shaped. Notwithstanding this, the deity is always addressed in the hymns by the priests as shapeless (*nirākār*), formless (*naiva rupam*), without hands

[1] Ibid. p. 131.

and feet (*na ca karacaranau*) and cipher-shaped (*sunya-murti*). None of the above appellations can be attributed to the tortoise. Moreover, though some of the Ādivāsis living on the western borders of West Bengal use tortoise as their clan totem and offer it only a minor place in their creation myths, there is no tortoise-cult in the real sense of the term either in West Bengal or in the aboriginal area on its western frontier. The view that Dharma is related to the tortoise is, therefore, hardly tenable. But there can be no doubt about the fact that the term Dharma has some Austric basis.

As regards K. P. Chattopadhyay's theory that the Dharma cult is a later development of the Vedic cult of Varuna, the question can be raised that supposing it is a Vedic cult, why should it be confined to a particular area of West Bengal alone and should be more popular with the lower sections of the people, especially the Doms, whose relationship with Vedic traditions is altogether non-existent? But the point raised by him that erstwhile human sacrifice has been substituted now by the sacrifice of the *Loue* (white) goat deserves serious attention.

Who is then this Dharma Ṭhākur ? Before entering into a discussion on this subject, the following characteristics of the deity, some of which must have been clear from the foregoing discussion, should be borne in mind : (*i*) He is worshipped during the months of drought only. (*ii*) His ceremonial bath forms a major ritual in his annual and special worship. (*iii*) He is the remover of barrenness. (*iv*) Animal sacrifice is an invariable concomitant of his worship. (*v*) He is conceived as all-white and he is propitiated with white offerings. (*vi*) He is the curer of diseases, particularly those afflicting the eyes and the skin. (*vii*) He is a malignant deity and punishes his detractors with leprosy. (*viii*) Clay horses are his favourite offerings. (*ix*) Twelve is the sacred number with him. (*x*) The Dom is the custodian of his worship.[1] (*xi*) The following hymn is recited in the course of his worship:

> "The cipher-shaped should be meditated upon as one who has no beginning, middle or end, who has neither hands nor feet, who has no body, nor any sound, who has no form or shape, who knows neither birth nor death, who is accessible to the best of saints only in their contemplation, who pervades one and all, who is the lord of all the worlds, who fulfils the desire of his devotees, and who showers his blessings both on gods and men."

From the above characteristics of the deity an attempt may now be made to establish its identity. It has been said that "in the primitive stage of agriculture, the powers supposed to be concerned in sending rain to earth received the largest share of worship." The sun is rightly supposed by primitive society to regulate rain and, therefore,

[1] Dharma worship seems to share a great many characteristics of fertility rites in primitive society.

when a drought occurs it becomes necessary either to propitiate the sun by means of worship or to compel it by magical rites to cause rainfall. Over the particular area of West Bengal where rain is always scarce and drought is almost a common feature, it is only natural to believe that the elaborate rituals which are performed during the period of scarcity of rain should be aimed at the sun. In the Dharma temple at Damrā in Burdwan district, over and above the annual worship, the deity is given special offerings of *juḍi* (rice boiled in milk) whenever scarcity of rain continues for long. Had Dharma not been the sun, he would not have been held responsible for the scarcity of rain.

In many Dharma shrines, the hook-swinging ceremony (*caḍak*) is still held on the occasion of the annual worship. Hook-swinging is but a popular form of sun-festival held in "imitation of swinging of the sun at the beginning of spring or at the solstices—a piece of magic to help the sun move." The *Bhaktyās* or the active participants in the annual worship of Dharma who now gyrate in the air are believed to be substitutes for the human victims who used to be sacrificed to the sun on similar occasions in the past. I have already stated that the ceremonial bath given to the deity on the occasion of its annual and *Gharbharā* forms of worship constitutes a special feature of the Dharma cult. Through this ritual the primitive agriculturists performed a sympathetic magic in order to cause rainfall. A deity receiving such a ceremonial bath represents the sun in almost all parts of the world. It may be mentioned in this connexion that the ceremonial bath of Jagannath at Puri (*Snānjātrā*) held on the eve of the rainy season is nothing but a continuance of the practice of sympathetic magic performed in order to force the sun to precipitate rain. It is still believed throughout the primitive world that the sun is responsible for fertilizing the earth. From the earth the idea has been extended also to women and the sun is thus believed to be the remover of barrenness from childless women. Due to the existence of the above qualities in Dharma Ṭhākur, he can easily be identified with the sun.

Animal sacrifice is an invariable adjunct to all forms of Dharma worship. The detailed and complicated rituals performed in connexion with the sacrifice of the *Loue* goat on the occasion of the *Gharbharā* form of Dharma worship have been rightly supposed by K. P. Chattopadhyay as the remnant of human sacrifice in vogue in earlier times. The sun being the most useful object of visible nature, especially in an agrarian society, it drew the most valuable offerings from its votaries for itself. A human sacrifice was naturally considered to be the most valuable gift to the 'Supreme Deity' of a primitive tribe. It is, therefore, natural to believe that the sun was also appeased in the past with human sacrifice which has now been replaced by animal sacrifice. The rituals once observed in making a human sacrifice seem still to continue to some extent in the case of

the sacrifice of the *Loué* goat. From the elaborate rituals of animal sacrifice still observed in connexion with the worship of Dharma, this deity is identified with the sun-god. It is needless to point out here that Dharma is neither the Vedic nor pseudo-Puranic sun-god of the higher Hindu pantheon; the tradition of Dharma is based on a primitive sun-cult which, through subsequent influences of Buddhism and Hinduism, has incorporated in itself certain elements of both of them. According to this primitive conception of the sun-god, the deity was all-white relishing white offerings only. Among the various tribes inhabiting this country from Kerala in the south to Assam in the north-east, this primitive sun-god is still worshipped with white sacrificial offerings, mostly white cocks, at the moment of sunrise. It has, therefore, been supposed that at "some remote past there had been a people living in Eastern India who were ardent worshippers of the sun-god, and this is the keynote of similarity about the sun-worship in tribes so widely separated from each other physically and geographically as the Khond and the Naga."[1] From the association in West Bengal of the Doms with the worship of Dharma or the sun-god, it is evident that over this area this particular class of people, who are undoubtedly one of the earliest inhabitants of this country, were the worshippers of the sun in this specific form. When, eventually, the Hindus came to settle in this area, they were also influenced by the religious practices of the local people to a considerable extent. And thus the worship of the primitive sun-deity was accepted by them in a new Hindu garb. Thenceforward, the deity came to be known as Dharma which is undoubtedly a Sanskritized name of some primitive non-Hindu word. From the association of the Doms and the use of the suffix Rāy with the local names of Dharma mentioned before, I am inclined to derive the word Dharma as follows: *Domrāy-Domrā-Dormā-Dharma*. According to popular traditions, it seems that during the middle ages the Doms distinguished themselves as a martial race guarding the western borders of Bengal in the employment of local chiefs. With the establishment of British rule, the local Dom army was naturally disbanded. But due to their martial traditions, the Doms failed to settle down as peaceful agriculturists. The necessity to protect the frontiers having permanently gone, the Doms were not considered useful in any way to society. Though it is not definitely known when the migration of the Bengali Doms began, it is a fact that a large number of Doms left the province to seek their fortunes in the neighbouring Ādivāsi areas from time to time. In this way they spread the name of their Supreme God Dharma in the forms of Dharma Deotā, Dharmes, Derāmmā and in various other names over the whole of the said aboriginal area where the tribal sun-deity

[1] T. C. Das—'Sun-worship amongst the Aboriginal Tribes of Eastern India' in Journal of the Department of Letters, Vol. XI (1924).

is now known by these Hinduized names though in some cases it still retains its own tribal names as well.

Serpent worship

Of all the animals held in worship in different parts of India, the serpent is the most important. Its cult is widely distributed throughout the whole of the country from Kashmir to Cape Comorin though it is more popular in the south. The cult as prevalent in Bengal is somewhat different in character from what it is in other parts of North India. Among the common run of people, both in Bengal and in the south, the cult has retained its primitive character to a very great extent. Roughly speaking, in North India, the image of a serpent, considered male in character and known as Nāgarāja or the king of the snakes, is held in worship and in the south it is the living snakes to whom worship is often offered. Instead of the 'king of the serpents' and the living snakes, an anthropomorphic serpent goddess known as Manasā is worshipped in Bengal. An exclusive cult known as the Manasā-cult has developed in this part of the country and it is highly popular among all sections of Hindus though more so among the lower classes in some areas. The rites observed in connexion with the worship of the serpent-goddess Manasā are widely different in different parts of Bengal. But from a careful analysis of them it would be clear that they have originated from a common source. The elements of difference which have developed in the course of time are nothing but local factors and, as such, have no intrinsic relationship with the fundamental tenets.

Of all places in Bengal, the area covered by the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan and Bankura has undoubtedly the largest number of votaries of the serpent-deity Manasā. Even to this day, serpent-worship in this area is a very well-developed and living cult. Almost in every village in this region a visitor comes across one or more serpent shrines which are but low mud-walled straw-roofed structures situated within the house-quadrangles of some of the lower class Hindus. Daily worship is offered in most of them where invariably a Hinduized Ādivāsi conducts the service. People of various sections of the Hindu community ungrudgingly join the worship though the educated higher class Hindus generally disassociate themselves from it. The shrines are maintained by a class of priests known as *Deyāsis*. Due to the growing influence of Hinduism, the services of Brahmin priests are also requisitioned on special occasions. Sometimes the maintenance of the serpent shrines is the only source of income of the *Deyāsis* who also act as exorcists in snakebites. No provision is, however, made in these shrines for the entry of air and light from outside when the only door is closed after the daily worship. Within are installed on raised altars the images of the serpent-deity known by various local names at various places, e.g. Chintāmani (literally meaning a fabulous gem capable of fulfilling every desire of its possessor), Jaldubari (a diver), Vishahari (destroyer of poison), Padma

or Padma-kumāri (lotus maiden), Buḍimā (the old mother), Dulāler Mā (Dulal's mother) etc. A Bagdi, Kaivarta or Mal, all Hinduized Ādivāsis, is entrusted with the duty of performing the worship which is adopted as a hereditary profession. On the raised altar within the shrine are to be seen three, five or seven earthen pitchers with the carvings of hoods of snakes around and covered with a thick layer of vermilion deposited on them since the day of their installation. Very rarely, however, a pitcher representing the deity is also seen, but in all cases they must add up to an odd number. On the top of each image are placed the green leaves of the milky hedge plant (*Euphorbia lingularum*) which are daily replaced at the time of worship. Sometimes brass nails, which are offered by the devotees in fulfilment of their vows, are stuck on the outer side of the clay pitchers. These nails are known as *chik* (one which glitters) as they shine in the dim light of the lamp burning within. The images are considered to be mutually related to each other as sisters and they are also differently named. Numerous legends are in vogue in connexion with these earthen pitchers which are worshipped as the serpent deity.

In the district of Bankura serpent worship has developed some special features. The shrines of the snake-deity are maintained here by free gift of land made mostly by the Malla Rajas. It seems that before the royal family of Vishnupur was initiated into Vaisnavism, it was a great patron of local cults and during that period it had made liberal donations of land for maintenance of the shrines of the local deities in almost every important village. Among the local deities Dharma Ṭhākur and Manasā are the most important and the land donated has been shared by them almost equally.

In Bankura the worship of the goddess Manasā commences on the Dasaharā or the tenth day of the bright half of the Bengali month of Jyaisṭha (May-June) and ends on Dāk-Saṁkrānti or the last day of Āswin (September-October). In the course of about these four months, the deity is offered worship in various ways. Narrative folk-songs glorifying the deity are sung and skill in curing snakebites is publicly exhibited by qualified exorcists in many places.

Although there are shrines for the goddess, an open space of land, generally under the shade of a tree, is more usually considered sacred to Manasā. Such a place is known as a *Manasā-thān* or the seat of Manasā. Sometimes Shashṭhi, the guardian deity of new born babies, is also offered worship at the same place. The abode of the goddess is generally marked by numerous offerings of baked clay horses and elephants of various sizes. Annual fairs are held near by in honour of Manasā or of Khairā Buḍi, which is a local name of Manasā. Sometimes the serpent deity is regarded as the presiding deity of a particular village and she is then offered community worship like any other village god or goddess. On the last day of the Bengali month of Srābana (August-September), the serpent deity is offered worship

in the *Sij* (*Euphorbia nerrifolia*) tree when people abstain from cooking and sometimes also on the following day. On these days a branch of the *Sij* tree is placed in the household oven by every housewife and uncooked food is offered to the deity in the hope of general welfare of the family. People of the Dom, Khaira, Bagdi, Bauri, Kaivarta and Met castes are the chief votaries of the serpent goddess.

Of all places in Bengal, it is only in the district of Bankura that a regular *Gājan* with all its usual features is held for Manasā in the manner of Siva's *Gājan* and Dharma's *Gājan* which are the most widely distributed folk festivals of Bengal. On the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Jyaistha (May-June), at the village Ayodhyā, only three miles from the Rāmsāgar railway station, the annual *Gājan* festival of Manasā is held. Ayodhyā then becomes a place of pilgrimage, in the real sense of the term, of the worshippers of Manasā in the district of Bankura. There is a remarkable image of Manasā here. She is represented by a clay pitcher having golden eyes and a face believed to be made of silver. Besides the pitcher representing the deity, there are six others, three on each side, representing her six sisters, or according to a different tradition, six sisters-in-law of Behulā. A big fair, lasting for a fortnight, is held on the occasion. Women of the village take a more active part in the *Gājan* celebrations than men. It looks like an annual housewives' conference. A remarkable feature of the women's assembly is the brides' and bridegrooms' procession. A batch of women form themselves into a mute procession some representing the brides and some the bridegrooms and march along the village thoroughfares. More than a hundred women *Bhaktyās* (selected devotees) take part in the festivities every year at this place. At dusk they assemble before the shrine and chant incantations to Manasā. Some among them get 'inspired' and make wild prophesies on diverse aspects of social and individual life. Besides many rituals requiring great physical suffering like fire-walking etc. are observed. Ceremonial ablution of the image of Manasā is also a feature of this festival. The *Bhaktyās* observe the usual fast and abstentions.

It is a common belief in Bankura that the serpent-deity Manasā does not accept offerings from Brahmins who, as a rule, do not offer her worship in any form in any village shrine. But on the occasion of *Nāg-Panchami*, which is the orthodox serpent festival of the Indian Hindus, the Brahmins act here as priests as usual. The priests of Manasā come from the Hāḍi, Dom, Bauri and Kaivarta castes as also from the Hinduized Ādivāsi communities alone.

A remarkable sculpture having twelve arms representing Vāsuki, the king of the Nāgas of the Mahābhārata Nāga legend, is to be found at the courtyard of the temple of Ekteswar near Bankura town. It has a canopy of twelve snake-hoods spread in a semi-circular way. Twelve-armed Vāsuki is unknown in India. It seems that in this

instance local tradition has influenced orthodox Hindu iconography.

In Bankura a special serpent festival, secular in character, is observed even to this day. This is known as *Jhāpān* which literally means a stage erected to exhibit tricks with snakes. The festival is held on the last day of the Bengali month of Srābana (August-September) when the annual serpent worship is held throughout the whole of Bengal. Though the influence of urban culture is fast rendering it obsolete, it was a very common sight during the last century. *Jhāpān*, in practice, is the annual conference of snake-charmers or exorcists of a particular area who assemble at a place on this occasion and demonstrate various tricks and feats with live snakes, claimed to be venomous, as they proceed with music along the public road. Sometimes the disciples of a preceptor would carry him aloft on their shoulder on a platform on which the preceptor exhibits various tricks with live snakes. Sometimes a bullock-cart is used as the mobile platform for this purpose. Eager crowds on either side of the road witness the performance with a mixed feeling of horror and delight. Fatal cases of snakebite occasionally occur among the participants when snakes with their poison-fangs unextracted are on display. Due to such fatal consequences, the practice has long been abandoned in many places with little prospect of its revival. The practice is confined among the Kaivartas (fishermen castes) in particular though, as a rule, every exorcist, to whatever caste he may belong, is allowed to participate in it.

A very rich folk literature, based on the local legends of the serpent goddess Manasā, flourished in Bengal since about the 13th century A.D. One of these legends written in the form of a narrative poem, gained the widest popularity throughout Bengal, Bihar and Assam. Hundreds of poets composed verses on the same theme which have been carried down the generations for centuries. It is known as the legend of the merchant Chānd and Behulā. But it is not the only story extant in Bengal that sings the glory of the serpent deity Manasā. There is yet another which is recited in the course of the ceremonial worship of the deity performed by Bengali women during the months of rain. Besides the above, there are innumerable snake stories of secular character occurring in the folk literature of Bengal.

The principal Bengali snake story, of the narrative of Chānd Sadāgar in its various forms, has been contributing to Bengali folk amusement of a secular nature since ancient times. There are four principal forms in which the narrative has been adapted for folk entertainment, namely *Bhāsānjātrā* or a popular form of drama, *Rayāni* or a form of musical entertainment, *Jāgaran* or a musical recitation of the narrative and *Putulnātch* or a puppet dance. In addition to these principal forms there are a few others of minor importance. All the above versions are still current in different parts of Bengal though they are already in a state of decay due to the impact of urban culture.

APPENDIX B

A BANKURA VILLAGE : SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE

BY

SANTIBHUSAN NANDI*

Bankura is one of the few districts in southern West Bengal which has, even in recent years of urbanization and industrialization, maintained its overwhelming agro-economic base. According to the 1951 Census, 81.75 per cent of the total population of the district depends on agriculture. Leaving aside the towns of Bankura and Vishnupur and few artisans' settlements at Rājagrām, Sonāmukhi and Kotulpur, the rural way of life obtains in the countryside.

Description of the life-pattern in a single village cannot represent the common characteristics of all the villages of the district. Geographically, the district is divisible into two regions: (*i*) the flat alluvial eastern part continuous with the Gangetic plains and (*ii*) the undulating tract with pronounced laterite incrustation to the west constituting the outer line of the Choṭanāgpur plateau. Turning to the physical forms of the villages in the district, we find certain important variations. Except in the extreme north-west where some dispersed clusters are seen, the rest of the north and the east is dominated by massive shapeless agglomerates. As we move towards the south, linear assemblages appear to be in preponderence. Again, from the population point of view the western region is marked by heavier concentration of Sāntāls, Bāuris, Bāgdis and Bhumijs (who live in partly segregated clusters at the outskirts of the Hindu villages) than in the east, where Bengali Hindu castes mostly reside. Thus, within the district, the villages vary not only in their geographical features but also in their physical forms and composition. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to present as a case-study some socio-cultural aspects of a village in the district.

The social scene

Ārāldihi, in Indpur police station, is a multi-caste village situated 34 km. (21 miles) south-west of Bankura town. It is situated at the junction of 23°5'N latitude and 86°57'E longitude. The name of the village is derived from *Ārāl* (cover) and *dihi* (collection of settlements). It is believed that the village was founded by the middle of

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the 18th century when some people came to reside here under cover of the jungles to protect them from the ravages of the Mahratta free-booters led by Bhaskar Rao.

Population and occupational mobility

The population of the village is composed of 14 endogamous caste-groups and totals 1,028 persons. The respective populations of the different caste-groups and their occupations are as follows:

Caste name	Traditional calling	Present calling of heads of households	No. of households		Population
Brahman	Priest, Scholar	Landowner	69		
		Cook	3		
		Teacher	2	78	527
		Pedlar	2		
		Priest	1		
		Salesman	1		
Bāori	Peasant, Earth-worker, Palanquin-bearer	Labourer	35	36	185
		Chowkidar	1		
Sadgope	Peasant	Peasant	9	10	59
		Labourer	1		
Chiḍākuṭā Mājhi	*Chiḍā* or parched and flattened rice-maker	Labourer	5		
		Carpenter	2		
		Peasant	2	11	50
		Chiḍā-maker	1		
		Beggar	1		
Goālā	Milk-seller	Labourer	6		
		Peasant	5	13	38
		Paddy-husker	1		
		Domestic servant	1		
Lohār	Blacksmith	*Chiḍā*-maker	4	7	37
		Labourer	3		
Nāpit	Barber	Barber	3	4	35
		Paddy-husker	1		
Kolu	Oil-presser	Grocer	3		
		Peasant	2	7	29
		Cart-driver	2		
Kumor	Potter	Potter	2		
		Peasant	1	4	17
		Pedlar	1		
Dom	Basket-maker	Basket-maker	1	1	16
Kaibartta	Peasant	Labourer	2	3	14
		Peasant	1		
Chāmār	Tanner	Musical drum-maker	1	1	10
Kāmār	Metal-worker	Blacksmith	1	1	9
Sunri	Liquor-brewer	Liquor-brewer	1	1	2
		TOTAL		177	1,028

A characteristic feature of the Hindu caste organization is that each of the castes is supposed to follow its own traditional calling

whether graded high or low. It is evident from the preceding table that there have been considerable shifts from traditional callings in respect of some of the caste-groups. The Brahmans (mainly Utkal Brahmans having surnames like Pondā, Pāṭhak, Pātra), who are in absolute majority in the village, mostly depend on cultivation through hired labourers or share-croppers. They own ploughs and draft animals but never cultivate themselves. They consider this new profession quite respectable but regard the callings of salesmen or pedlars derogatory to their caste status. The Bāuris are all landless and do not even have ploughs and bullocks to till the land as share-croppers. Hence, most of them earn their living as day-labourers or agricultural workers. An agricultural hand appointed for a fixed term is locally called *māndār*. The Mājhi menfolk have taken to a number of other occupations since *chiḍā* making alone cannot support their households. Mājhi women, however, still prepare *chiḍā* which is a secondary source of income to the families. Some of the Goālās who have changed over to cultivation believe that their new profession is more remunerative than milk selling. The Goālā labourers complained that they have no capital and no suitable pastures. The Lohārs are unaware of the techniques of blacksmithy and regard the competition with factory-made tools and implements detrimental to their interests. Similarly, the Kolus affirmed that it was not economical to compete with the oil-mill industry.

With the shift from traditional callings, there is evidence of increased dependence on land. Many people belonging to the caste-groups like the Kāmārs, Kolus and *Chiḍākuṭā* Mājhis have changed over to farming. It appears that when a caste member has perforce to change its traditional calling he has to encounter, besides economic curbs, two major limitations. Firstly, due to occupational specialization of the artisan or craftsman castes in certain trades and the corporate character of the caste-groups, the technical knowledge of a trade is the monopoly of the caste concerned. Consequently, a non-artisan caste-group cannot easily adopt such a calling. (Even the artisan castes, for similar reasons, cannot interchange one another's avocations). Secondly, he has to select an occupation which is not deemed socially incompatible with the prevailing status of the caste-group he belongs to. For instance, a Sadgope or a Nāpit would not normally like to engage in basket-making, tanning, scavenging, cloth-washing and so on which are deemed polluting. These factors have led to pressure on land either directly or indirectly.

Hierarchical order

A basic feature of the Hindu social system is that the caste-groups are arranged in a hierarchical order. In the multi-caste village under review, the 14 caste-groups are, accordingly, placed in a hierarchical gradation. The Brahmans undisputedly occupy the highest position. According to the opinion of three adult Brahman males of the village

who were interviewed, the 14 caste-groups should be arranged in the following six hierarchical tiers:

(*i*) Brahman
(*ii*) Sadgope, Kāmār, Kumor, Nāpit
(*iii*) Kaibartta, Kolu
(*iv*) Chiḍākuṭā Mājhi, Lohār
(*v*) Sunri, Bāuri, Dom
(*vi*) Chāmār

The four *Nabasākha* caste-groups in the second tier are those from whom water is accepted by the Brahmans. The remaining caste-groups are not so regarded. The Brahmans would not dine at the house of any other caste. They would not even accept food boiled with water by a member of any non-Brahman caste. After performing the duties of a priest in a ritual they could, however, accept *seedhā* consisting of unboiled rice, raw vegetables, fruits and sweetmeats. In a social feast, the Brahmans are served first. When they have finished (or after they have been served, which is a recent change), the four *Nabasākha* caste-groups partake in the repast sitting near by but each in a separate row. The caste-groups in the third and the fourth tiers may sit simultaneously but in segregated rows. The caste-groups in the last two tiers take food either in the courtyard or outside the inner compound of the household.

The social hiatus between the caste-groups is also evident from the physical layout of the village. Ārāldihi is a linear settlement with the main street extending more or less east-west. Dwellings belonging to the Brahmans and the *Nabasākha* caste-group, like the Sadgopes, Kumors, Kāmārs and Nāpits (who are taken by the Brahmans as clean Sudras), are lined up along the sides of the main street. The other caste-groups from whom water is not accepted and who also live near about the main street are the Kolus and the Kaibarttas. The *Chiḍākuṭā* Mājhis live at a corner of the main street. A few narrow lanes branch off north from the main street which are also inhabited by the aforesaid higher castes. The Goālās, Doms and Lohārs live in separate clusters to the east away from the main street. The Bāuris live in two separate groups, one to the north and the other to the east farthest apart from the heart of the village. The only Sunri household is located at the extreme eastern end of the main village path.

The Kāmārs, Kumors and Nāpits have a common priest for performing socio-religious ceremonies. The Bāuris have no priest and the *Mukhyā* (chief of the community) officiates in marriage ceremonies. The Chāmārs and Doms of the village are also not served by Brahman priests and one of their own caste members officiates in their rituals according to custom. The remaining caste-groups have their own respective priests who would not serve a second caste of this settlement.

Marital practices

Child marriage had been customary among most of these caste-groups in the village but the practice is not so much adhered to now by the Brahmans and the Sadgopes. Among the Bāuris and the Lohārs, both adult and infant marriage are in vogue. Selection of the partners within the same village is disliked although such unions occasionally occur among the Bāuris. Except among the Sadgopes who lay great stress on *sātpāk* (the carrying of the bride 7 times round the bridegroom), *sindurdān*, i.e. marking the bride's forehead at the parting of the hair with vermilion, is the binding function in the marriage ceremony of all the caste-groups. Another important custom among the Bāuris is that, unlike all other caste-groups, the bride is taken to the place of marriage by her elder sister; among all other caste-groups the bride is thus carried by her maternal uncle or brother-in-law. *Sāngā* or widow-marriage is prevalent among the Bāuris—the deceased husband's younger brother being preferred as the bridegroom. When a divorced Bāuri woman marries again she cannot wear *sānkhā* (conch-shell bangle), *lohā* (iron bangle) and *sindur* (vermilion) so long as the former husband is alive. When a widow takes a second husband, none of these are also worn.

***Sholo-ānā* and leadership**

The caste-groups like the Bāuris, Sadgopes, Mājhis, Goālās, Lohārs, Nāpits and Kolus have their own traditional panchayats locally known as *Sholo-ānā* which are at various stages of disorganization. Breach of caste customs and minor disputes are decided by the elders of the caste in sittings of the *Sholo-ānā* but occasionally Brahman elders are approached for resolution of conflicts. The smaller caste-groups like the Kāmārs and Doms try to settle their disputes with the help of Brahmans who are mostly literate and possess some working knowledge of land laws and judicial procedures. A new pattern of leadership seems to be emerging in the village under review. In 1959, when the author visited the village first, the President of the local Union Board, who resided in the village, was a Brahman with considerable landed property. The Secretary of a newly formed branch of a renowned political organization operating in the village was another Brahman and a teacher by profession who never owned much landed property but had close contacts with the district headquarters of the organization and through it had acquaintance with important personalities at the headquarters town. He helped the villagers in obtaining agricultural loans, in getting their wards or sick relatives admitted into schools or hospitals and securing permits or licences for shops and articles for those who needed them. Furthermore, by mobilizing efforts to improve the village streets through test relief schemes and raising the status of the local school, he earned a good deal of popularity.

Market relationship and co-operation

The *hāṭ* at Gunnāth, a village 3 km. (2 miles) away, plays an important role in the life of this rural community. Inhabitants of the village not only visit this *hāṭ* for purchase and sale of paddy, earthen

pots etc. but it also provides a venue for meeting friends and relatives. Daily necessities like pulses, spices, oils, molasses and cheap stationery articles are purchased from three shops owned by Ḳolus. Informations about surplus stocks of rice, paddy, milk, ghee etc. held by a neighbour spread through gossips. The villagers are generally aware which farmer or producer holds a particular item in surplus quantity. On ceremonial occasions, the performing household requests the family having a surplus to spare to sell or lend the requisite articles or fish from ponds. For purchases of cattle and buffaloes people have to visit the *hāṭs* at Hāilākāndi and Kāsipur 26 and 52 km. (16 and 32 miles) away respectively. Other long-term necessities are purchased from Bankura town.

The village on its own part provides a shopping centre for smaller neighbouring villages like Nischindapur 1.6 km. (1 mile), Karustuliā 3.2 km. (2 miles) and Jānorā 4.8 km. (3 miles) away. Sometimes, the Kolu shopowners themselves send pedlars with daily necessities to those villages and barter spices, oils etc. in exchange of rice or paddy or accept payment in cash.

Material items of culture

DWELLINGS: Except those of the poor Bāuris and Doms, most of the other houses are protected by high mud walls with an entrance from the road and an exit on to a pond, kitchen garden or *khāmār* (threshing ground) at the rear. The dwelling huts as well as the kitchen and the cowshed are set around a central courtyard for convenience in attending to domestic chores and privacy within the household. At the centre of the courtyards of almost all the dwellings, irrespective of caste, is a basil plant, sometimes on a raised platform called *tulsi-mancha*, where a woman of the house lights an earthen lamp, blows a conch and stoops in reverence every evening offering prayers to Hari or Vishnu. Another regular practice with all the castes is for a woman of the household to smear a solution of cowdung in small circular patches on the path just outside the main entrance, in front of the *tulsi-mancha*, and at the *khāmār*. The ritual is called *maruli dewā* and is followed by the sprinkling of the same solution on the floors of the living rooms and the courtyard which is called *gobar chhaḍā dewā*. All these are done with a belief that goddess Lakshmi visits and blesses such households with prosperity as are purified in this manner. Usually, south-facing or east-facing cottages are preferred for dwelling purposes.

There are two principal types of cottages--the *koṭhā* or the double-storeyed mud house and *kūḍey* having a single floor. The walls are of mud and the two-storeyed cottages have a foundation four feet deep with boulders, in some cases, at the bottom. The building material consists of common clay thoroughly mixed up with water by trampling it under foot. If it is sticky alluvium, some stone chips and sand are added but not when the selected earth is sandy loam.

Chunks of the prepared soil are then placed one above the other in the form of rectangular blocks. When one layer has dried up another layer is placed atop. Some water is sprinkled on the upper surface of the dried layer before placing the new layer over it. When the walls attain the desired height, a sandy loam is mixed with cowdung, chaff and water and pasted over both the vertical surfaces of the walls. This is called *gucheṭi dewā*. This is followed by *uleṭi dewā* in which operation a kind of sticky clay is collected from the paddy fields and after being properly mixed with cowdung and water, pasted over the walls to bring about surface smoothness. In some cottages, the walls are painted by women firstly with a black solution of cowdung mixed with ashes of burnt hay and over this again a solution of washerman's blue, water and *khaḍimāṭi* (i.e. white clay available in the neighbouring village of Manipur, 5 km. away) is applied. The walls of the two-storeyed structures gradually decrease in thickness from about 64 cm. (25 inches) at the bottom to about 38 cm. (15 inches) at the top. The plinth is also made of earth and its height varies from 30 to 46 cm. (12 to 18 inches).

There are usually four sloped sides to the cottage roofs which are thatched with hay or corrugated iron sheets with curvilinear margins. The Bāuris and Mājhis are employed for thatching roofs and Mājhi carpenters make the wooden doors and windows. The living room is also used for storing food, apparels, valuables etc. and in a sacred corner of it is the seat of the family deity, usually Lakshmi or Nārāyan. Before construction of a hut an astrologer is consulted who, by *nāga-vichār* (a method of foretelling based on the mythical belief that the world is resting on the head of a giant snake named *Bāsuki*), determines whether the location is free from evil influences ensuring peace and prosperity to the family. By drawing some magic lines on the ground and consulting the almanac this astrologer from the neighbouring Madhuniā village also fixes the auspicious time when the first diggings for the construction of a hut should start.

FOOD HABITS: Although rice is the staple food, under conditions of extreme scarcity gram powder and even leafy vegetables are cooked and consumed. Women of all caste-groups do not normally eat the principal meals before the male members of their families. Among caste-groups like the Brahmans, Sadgopes, Kāmārs, Kumors and Nāpits, women do not touch the rice boiling pot without changing the last night's clothings and during menstrual periods abstain from entering the kitchen. The average meals of the population under normal conditions are as follows:

(i) The *nāstā* or breakfast eaten between 6 and 8 a.m. and consisting of *muḍi* (puffed rice) or *chiḍā* (parched and flattened rice) taken with molasses, chillis, onion or salt. Some people also consume *pāntā* (stale rice soaked in water) with onion or chilli

and salt. Tea drinking is limited amongst the rich and the middle classes.

(*ii*) The mid-day meal, taken between 12 noon and 2 p.m., consists of boiled rice with lentil soup with helpings of *sāk* or fried vegetables, especially by the poor like the Bāuris, Chāmārs and Doms. The middle and the rich classes add one or two vegetable curries or fish dishes. Meats of goat, hare or duck are consumed only occasionally but not by all Brahmans.

(*iii*) The afternoon tiffin consisting of *muḍi* or *pāntā* is taken in the usual manner. Poor people like the Bāuris and Doms do not enjoy this repast and they dine instead shortly after sunset.

(*iv*) The dinner, eaten between 7 and 9 p.m., consists of boiled rice with lentil soup in the case of the poor with additions of vegetable curries and fish preparations for the rich.

Agricultural activity and technique of cultivation

The months of *Phālgun*, *Chaitra* and *Baisākh* constitute a lean period for agriculture which starts in right earnest with the onset of the monsoons. A peasant has, however, no real recess and is never free from agricultural chores except during the four days of *Ambubāchi*, beginning from the 8th day of *Āshāḍh*, which is regarded as the first day of the rainy season when the earth is popularly believed to enter upon a period of menstruation lasting for four days when all farming activities are tabooed. As many as 83.6 per cent of the households in Ārāldihi are directly or indirectly dependant on land, paddy being the principal crop. There are four kinds of paddy cultivation: (1) *chāli* (harvested in *Srāban*), (2) *āus* (harvested in *Kārttik*), (3) *nuān* (harvested in *Agrahāyan*) and (4) *āman* (harvested in *Paush*). Of these, *nuān* is the chief variety grown in the village. In the month of *Phālgun* or *Chaitra* (usually after a shower or two), the *talā-khet* (a plot of land where seedlings are grown for transplantation) and the land for *chāli* cultivation are ploughed and the seeds are sown in *Chaitra*. *Chāḷi* cultivation needs a lot of weeding and hence only small areas are brought under this crop. In the same month, cowdung manure is strewn in the *talā-khet* as well as in the *nuān* and *āus* fields where seedlings are to be transplanted. At the beginning of *Baisākh*, when some ponds dry up, slimy soil from their beds is collected and distributed over some of the less fertile lands. In order to meet the demand of all agricultural plots, manures are thus spread only in alternate years. When there are a few showers towards the end of *Jyaishṭha*, *āman* and *āus* seeds are sown in the *talā-khet* after it has received several ploughings and the crushing of clods of earth and general levelling through the dragging of the ploughman's ladder over the surface. To ensure even distribution, seeds are sown crosswise, once from the north to the south and again from the east to the west or *vice versa*. In a *talā-khet* measuring a *kāṭhā* (67 sq. metres or 720 sq. feet), 3 seers of paddy seeds are sown which

is followed by further ploughing and dragging of the ladder. This operation is called *uvāni* and is repeated again after two or three days. Before sowing the seeds, drains are cut all round the *talā-khet* and excess water is run off so that the seeds could germinate in contact with the soil. During *Jyaishṭha*, weeding operation has to be undertaken in the *chāli* fields and all *āus* and *nuān* lands are cultivated for the second time. This second ploughing is locally called *sāmāl*. In *Āshāḍh* with the advent of the monsoons, a third ploughing or *peshan* is carried out. The *āman* fields are also ploughed twice after manuring at an interval of about a week. The third ploughing of *āman* plots normally follow after an interval of two or three days. The *āl* or low embankments round the cultivated plots are then mended keeping the entire land submerged under water for three or four days and then all water is drained out leaving only a shallow accumulation about two inches deep. At the end of *Āshāḍh* or early in *Srāban*, the paddy seedlings grown in the *talā-khet*, which are by now 8 to 10 inches in height, are uprooted and collected in bunches on the afternoon preceding the day of transplantation. Before the *rowā* or transplanting operation starts, the *āman* field is again ploughed and a ladder is pulled over it which is called *kādā dewā*. Men and women participate in transplantation. Bunches of 4 to 6 seedlings with roots intact are thrust into the moist soil at intervals of 10 to 12 inches. After the *āman* transplantation, *āus* seedlings are also transplanted in the same manner. But if the monsoon sets in earlier than expected, the *āus* seedlings are transplanted ahead of the *āman* seedlings after two hurried ploughings and laddering operations in close interval of a day or two. *Āman* and *āus* transplantation is followed by transplantation of *nuān* seedlings, grown in the *talā-khet* since early *Āshāḍh*. In *Srāban*, the *chāli* crops which were sown in *Chaitra* or *Baisākh* are harvested and the fields are ploughed again and the embankments repaired to hold water for decomposing into manure the roots and stumps of stems left on the field. After a week, water is let out and the fields ploughed twice followed each time by ladder-levelling. Towards the end of *Srāban* or early in *Bhādra*, *nuān* seedlings are transplanted in these fields. In the month of *Bhādra*, a weeding operation is carried out in all the *āus*, *nuān* and *āman* fields by men and women. The weeding is followed by the *ulṭāna* operation when earth in between the rows of transplanted seedlings is scraped and put at the base of the stems for the dual purpose of giving them support and facilitating the growth of new roots. The landowners and labourers all remain busy when harvesting and threshing operations are on in the different fields and *khāmārs* from the middle of *Kārttik* till the end of *Paush*.

Shrines and worship

At Ārāldihi there is co-existence of different religious cults as is manifested by the presence of the temple of Rāḍhā-Dāmodar with

a metal icon of Gopāl (child Vishnu) and a *Sālagrāmsilā* (stone symbol of Vishnu), a temple of Siva with a phallic emblem as also a shrine founded on animistic belief of a *Grām Devatā* under a banyan tree where there is no idol but only terracotta horses and elephants. The inhabitants make offerings to and revere all these deities. The position of the Bāuris, Doms and Chāmārs in the religious life of the community can be illustrated by the fact that during the *Gājan* festival of Siva, those belonging to the caste-groups of Kumor, Kāmār, Sadgope, Mājhi and Lohār can fast for several days as *vaktyās* or select devotees of Siva but this privilege is not conceded to the former three caste-groups who have to satisfy themselves with the food offerings made to the deity. There is, however, no instance of their endeavouring to earn this privilege and upper castes withholding it.

Cycle of festivals

Barring the months of *Jyaishṭha*, *Agrahāyan* and *Chaitra*, there is some major festival or other during the remaining months of the year. There is the *Vaishnava* festival of *Chabbis-prahar Nām-sankirtan*, the *Sākta* festival of Kāli-*pujā* and the Sivaite festival of *Gājan*. On the full moon night of *Baisākh*, the villagers organize *Chabbis-prahar Nām-sankirtan*. One *prahar* is equivalent to three hours and the non-stop singing of devotional songs continues for seventy-two hours or three days round an altar on which is placed *bhog* (prepared food offerings) to *Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu*. The offerings consist of *chiḍā*, curd, fruits, flowers, sweets, milk and *tulsipātā* (basil leaf). People of all castes except the Sunris, Bāuris, Doms and Chāmārs sing together. People from neighbouring villages of Gunnāth (3.2 km.), Jālor (4.8 km.), Tentulia (4.8 km.), Jagannāthpur (4.8 km.) also come to participate in the chorus singing. A Goswāmi Brahman from Brajarājpur (6.4 km.) officiates as a priest. At the end of the festival, that is after the twenty-fourth *prahar*, elaborate *bhog* in 52 or 108 earthen pots is offered.

In *Jyaishṭha*, the *Gājan* festival is held to celebrate the marriage of Siva with *Pārvati*. The *vaktyās* fast on the day of the festival, collect fruits from the trees without the owners' consent and deposit them in the Siva temple. Thereafter, all the *vaktyās* including the *mul* or *pāṭ-vaktyā* (chief devotee) take their bath in a pond and the latter is carried by the other devotees on a wooden plank pegged with innumerable iron spikes. On reaching the Siva temple, they stoop down in reverence before the *lingam*. The offerings they make consist of fruits, *pāyas* (rice porridge), honey, flowers, wood-apple leaves and *gānjā* (Indian hemp) and so on. Brahmans of the village officiate as priests by rotation. A small fair is held on the occasion and people from neighbouring villages visit it.

The next important festival is *Rathajātrā* when the Brahmans prepare rice cakes and some vegetarian dishes at their homes. After the observance of Manasā-*pujā* (worship of the serpent goddess)

on the last day of *Srāban*, the inhabitants observe *Nandotsab* or *Janmāshṭami* on the 8th day of the dark fortnight of *Bhādra* and *Rādhāshṭami* on the 8th day of the bright fortnight of the same month. On both these days, Rādhā-Dāmodar is also worshipped with the singing of devotional songs.

An important festival of the Kāmārs and Kumors is *Viswakarmā-pujā* held in *Bhādra*. On this day, they refrain from work and clean and worship their vocational implements. Palatable dishes are cooked at home and some play hosts to Brahmans, the food being cooked by Brahmans themselves. On the last day of *Bhādra*, the unmarried girls of the village observe *Bhādu-pujā* by singing *Bhādu* songs. This festival is in commemoration of *Bhādu*, the beautiful daughter of a legendary king.

In *Āswin* the people celebrate *Jitāshṭami* (worship of king *Jimutvāhana*, noted for his charitable disposition). This is observed especially by the Brahmans and the Sadgopes. The village also performs Durgā-*pujā*, Lakshmi-*pujā* and Kāli-*pujā* in the months of *Āswin* and *Kārttik*. In the latter month, sisters observe *Bhāiphōṭā* by offering sumptuous dishes to their brothers, marking their foreheads with sandal paste and praying for their well-being.

The next important festival is *Paush-pārban* falling on the last day of the month of *Paush*. On this day the housewife offers prayers to Lakshmi and the head of the household ties a bunch of fresh paddy-stalks on doors and boxes as also on the *maḍāi* or *golā* (grain store) which is then filled with the harvest. The stalks remain for three days before they are thrown into neighbouring tanks. The idea is that goddess Lakshmi has come into the household when she is 'tied' to the family. During these three days, various types of *piṭhās* (country sweets) are prepared by the women. The other two important festivals observed by the inhabitants are the Saraswati-*pujā* and the *Doljātrā* occurring in the months of *Māgh* and *Phālgun* respectively.

The expenses of a festival are had by making collections from the bridegrooms when they come to marry girls of the village as also by raising subscriptions. A bridegroom on his arrival performs *pujā* in the main temples of the village before being allowed to enter the bride's place. He is also to honour the people of the village by paying a sum varying between five and ten rupees to a Brahman *mukhyā* (leader) of the village. This payment is called *grām sholo ānā mānya* (honorarium to all the people of the village). The Brahman bridegrooms are under compulsion to pay this *mānya* while members of other castes are also pressed for it according to their economic condition.

Conclusion

Caste is still the most important factor in the social system of the village. In spite of the shift in the traditional callings of some of the caste-groups, the social ranking has not changed. Sadgopes

are peasants and almost all the Goālās are either peasants or agricultural labourers. But this common agricultural occupation has not brought the two castes on the same hierarchical plane. It is refreshing to note that Brahmans who had so long been mainly landowners are now taking active interest in agriculture. This village has never been through an isolated existence in the past. Even if we exclude the modern changes due to improved communications, better socio-economic integration through marital connexions and market relationships, the village has always maintained socio-economic ties with neighbouring villages as it was never self-sufficient in all respects. The pattern of leadership in the village has taken a new turn during the last several years. But the caste-groups like the Kaibarttas, Goālās, Bāuris etc. have to depend on the Brahmans for everything which requires the knowledge of the three R's. It was observed during the survey that caste-groups like the Bāuris, Doms and Chāmārs are not only at the lowest rungs of the social ladder having a low ritual status but, conditioned by economic factors, they have a life pattern which is considerably lower in all respects than that of the so-called upper castes.

CHAPTER IV

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION

LAND RECLAMATION AND UTILIZATION

Agriculture is the chief occupation of the people of the district and the main source of livelihood of about 81.74 per cent of its population. The average agricultural holding in the district is of the order of 1.5 acres as compared to the State and all-India averages of 2.9 and 4.8 acres respectively. About 53 per cent of the total area of the district falls under the net cropped area and the culturable wastes aggregate to as much as 13 per cent. On an average 7 per cent of the area is not available for cultivation. The utilization pattern is not a constant feature. It changes with the lapse of years. Waste lands are reclaimed every year; roads, buildings and irrigation channels are constructed, which cover new areas from year to year. More and more areas come under double cropping and the cropped area varies almost every year due to changing natural phenomena. The table[1] below shows land utilization in the district from 1959-60 to 1963-64.

LAND UTILIZATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT
(in thousand acres)

	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64
Total area of the district	1,694	1,694	1,694	1,694	1,694
Area under forests	329.0	333.0	342.0	345.0	348.0
Area not available for cultivation	150.6	102.7	102.0	102.0	101.0
Other uncultivated land excluding current fallow	205.0	201.2	206.1	202.0	205.0
Current fallow	192.0	215.4	182.6	159.3	157.5
Net area sown	836.0	842.3	926.3	934.6	940.0
Area sown more than once	46.7	47.5	54.5	62.9	65.8
Total cropped area	885.7	889.8	973.8	981.5	987.8

Certain difficulties stand in the way of better recovery and utilization of land. The uncultivable wastes in the district do not form

[1] Source: Report of the District Agricultural Marketing Officer, Bankura, for 1964.

large blocks but lie rather scattered. With increasing pressure on land, cultivable wastes are gradually being used for growing crops. There are, however, hardly any large compact parcels of waste land that can easily be brought under the plough. It is often found that lands long left uncultivated generally suffer from certain shortcomings which cannot be removed without considerable expenditure. Sometimes it is also not economical for the farmers to cultivate isolated plots of waste land. However, attempts are made in feasible cases to reclaim such waste lands for expansion of agriculture. The cultivators are helped with land improvement loans and loans for reclaiming culturable waste lands lying all over the district in small pockets. The land reclamation work has made some progress in recent years mostly through small irrigation schemes. The gross area reclaimed during 1961-65 is shown in the table below with a yearwise break-up.[1]

Year	Area reclaimed (in acres)
1961-62	1,193
1962-63	2,535
1963-64	1,564
1964-65	1,518

Soil erosion

The process of fluvial and wind erosion and the process of deposition of the eroded materials are two distinct aspects of the problem of soil erosion. When erosion takes place in a particular region, the soil, robbed of its wealth, gradually becomes poorer and poorer. Deposition of eroded materials like silt can enrich lands but the phenomenon is not necessarily beneficial everywhere. Constant silting up of the beds of rivers obstructs their easy flow. The Damodar has been chocked up to a great extent by sand aggradation. Such decay of a river adversely affects agriculture, health, commerce and communication in the riparian tracts. Soil erosion even threatens to silt up the reservoirs, barrages and channels constructed under the various river valley projects which underlines the great importance of soil conservation measures.

The problem of soil erosion in Bànkura district is being tackled jointly by the Departments of Forests and Agriculture & Community Development. Contour bunds have been set up in different areas and many more are scheduled to be constructed in the near future. A programme of afforestation, which is in the process of execution by the Forests Department on their own lands in the district, has also made some headway. But the problem is so vast that a co-ordinated soil conservation scheme is necessary to tackle

[1] Source: District Agricultural Officer, Bankura.

the problem adequately. The following extract from the final report of the West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee, 1959 will give an idea of the extent of the problem:

"The catchment area of the Silabati river is mostly in the district of Bankura and measures 3,38,500 acres with 95,000 acres under forests and 32,000 acres as waste lands. The waste lands represent the culmination of a harmful process that started long ago when agricultural production was looked upon as the only occupation of the rural people. The configuration of the terrain being undulating, the clearance of forests for agriculture without the usual safeguards for conservation resulted in abnormal impoverishment of soil. The fertile top soil has been gradually removed in the process of erosion and the lands are now subjected to periodic cultivation with negligible yield of crops. Surface erosion and run-off are very severe in these areas and unless put under permanent cover immediately, these are likely to be lost for ever for any kind of land use. Forests were also not an exception to this type of maltreatment of land by their users. The acquisition by Government of Silabati catchment area was held up by private owners till 1955 when Government of West Bengal started acquiring them for direct management. Unregulated cutting, grazing and burning have opened up the tree canopy and destroyed the undergrowth to such an extent that their value in the matter of conservation of soil and moisture has diminished at an alarming rate. . . . The Flood Enquiry Committee recommends that these badly affected areas should be taken up under integrated soil conservation schemes for afforestation and soil conservation works."[1]

Lands of Bankura, particularly in the western and northern parts, are mostly lateritic and undulating in nature. Accordingly, a good portion of the uplands is cultivable waste and is subject to erosion hazards because of the absence of adequate vegetative cover and low moisture holding capacity of the soil. The uplands are, therefore, becoming poorer with the gradual removal of top soils; the rivers, streams and even the tanks and other water reservoirs are getting silted up. Even the cultivated lands are often damaged due to the deposition of sand and gravels and the eating away of the cultivated lands by the expanding gullies. The State Agriculture Department is now making a three-pronged effort, described below, to combat this menace.

(a) The waste lands, particularly in the catchment areas of the Kangsabati, Silabati and Gandheswari rivers, are being surveyed for determining which of the waste lands are suitable for agricultural purposes, what types of soil conservation measures are required to be taken in these lands before bringing

[1] Final Report of the West Bengal Flood Enquiry Committee, 1959, Vol. I, 1962, pp. 84-85.

them under cultivation, and what types of crops could be grown on them.

(*b*) Soil conservation measures, namely contour bunding and terracing are being undertaken at Government cost in the cultivable waste lands and also in the cultivable lands which are subject to erosion hazards. In addition to this, the cultivators are also being given extra incentive in the form of free supply of manures and fertilizers for reclamation of these lands. Since the inception of the scheme in 1963-64, about 8,000 acres of land have already been contour-bunded or terraced.

(*c*) The gully control work has also made some progress in these areas. This will help achieve better moisture conservation and at the same time prevent the gullies from scouring away the adjoining lands.

IRRIGATION

Rivers

The river system of the district as also floods and flood control measures have already been dealt with in Chapter I. The principal waterways are mentioned here only in the context of their irrigation potential.

The Damodar does not, by itself, cater very much for the irrigation of the district except for the diversion of its waters from the Durgapur Barrage reservoir along the Right Bank Main Canal of the D.V.C. which runs for a total length of 54 km. (34 miles) within the district across Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas police stations irrigating, through its subsidiary canals, about 40,000 acres of land in these areas. A more detailed account of this irrigation network is to be found under a succeeding sub-section entitled 'Dams and Canals'. The main tributaries of the Damodar are the Sāli and the Bodāi. The former drains out a large portion of Sonamukhi and Patrasayer thanas and, in its lower reaches, is dammed and used for irrigation purposes. The Bodai, which is a small channel of the Damodar, is only locally important for the irrigation facilities provided by it. The Dwarakeswar, especially in its western stretches, has steep banks with a low level of water which presents difficulties in its waters being used for agriculture. The Silabati has a very tortuous course and is rather deep at places making it unsuitable for large-scale irrigation in its riparian areas. With the commissioning of the Kangsabati Dam, the waters of the Kangsabati and the Kumāri would be harnessed for irrigating large tracts of land within the district as also beyond it. (A detailed account of the Kangsabati Dam and its irrigation potential is given in the sub-section on 'Dams and Canals').

As the rivers are mostly rain-fed and remain practically dry over the best part of the year, there is no assured supply of water from this source for cultivation. Rainfall being scanty and uneven, drought conditions sometimes prevail over large areas of the district

causing much suffering to the poorer sections of the people. Paddy, the main crop of the district, depends heavily on adequate seasonal rainfall which occurs only rarely. Bankura is a district where droughts have caused more damage than floods. The uneven distribution of rainfall also causes sporadic distress in scattered areas. Past experience shows that while there were bumper harvests in the eastern thanas of the district, simultaneous distress in the western region was common and very often famine relief or test relief work had to be undertaken to mitigate the suffering of the people of those parts. In fact, test relief operations are more or less a perennial feature of the administration of the district even to this day.

Bāndhs and canals

In this context of things, artificial irrigation has always been of importance in the district. The natural configuration of the terrain, except in the eastern parts, being undulating, it is easy and economical to arrange conservation of water by throwing embankments across the drainage lines or small nullahs. These storage pools, set up at a level higher than the fields to be irrigated, are called *bāndhs* and their main purpose is to prevent the monsoon rain draining off too quickly and to supply water from the resultant reservoir to adjoining fields. In the west of the district such embanked reservoirs are a common feature while to the east the ordinary tanks with four embanked sides are noticeable. Most of these *bāndhs* or tanks are of considerable antiquity though some are of modern origin having been constructed during the famine relief operations of recent years. Canal irrigation was not widely known to the people of the district in the past. Only in certain areas under Indas and Kotulpur police stations and in the north of Sonamukhi thana such irrigation was considered feasible. In most other parts of the district, the land surface is broken up by low ridges, valleys and hills which render canal irrigation impracticable. Mention may be made in this connexion of the canal network known as *Subhankar Dānrā* which was executed as early as the first half of the 18th century in the northern part of Sonamukhi thana to counter-act the natural susceptibility of that area to droughts. "The system consisted of several main and branch channels, fed by the monsoon, which irrigated about 80 square miles." (O'Malley). The high land lying between the rivers Damodar and Sali did not get any advantage from the flood spills of either river and the whole area between Āsuriā and Rāmpur was once a vast waste before the implementation of this irrigation scheme. The digging of the *Subhankar Dānrā* was an immediate success and the barren tract became fit for cultivation and at one stage a revenue of Rs. 12,000 was derived from the area irrigated by it. But with the passing of years, the canals gradually silted up and the embankments were broken. In some places, the courses of the canals became obliterated and the cultivators were soon found to encroach upon

their beds. In 1897, under the initiative of the then Collector, Manisty, the canals were partially re-excavated as a famine measure. A scheme for the maintenance of the canals was also formulated but it could not be implemented for want of funds. The law provided no means for enforcing payment of enhanced rents and it was found impossible to realize the subscriptions from the cultivators whose lands were irrigated. Local jealousies also stood in the way of fair distribution of canal water.

O'Malley gives a brief account of the efforts made in other parts of the district in the past to obtain irrigation water. "Several important tanks and *bāndhs* were also constructed in the Gangājalghāti thana, viz., a dam was built across the Jeolājor at the ninth mile of the Gangājalghāti-Sāltorā road; the Kusthal *bāndh*, Charuri tank, and Vaishnava *bāndh* were excavated at Sāltorā; and much was done to improve the sacred Siva Gangā tank at the foot of the Bihārināth hill, and also the Krishnapur and Uddhabpur *bāndhs*. Other minor sources of irrigation are the Jamunā and Krishna *bāndhs*, two artificial lakes at Bishnupur, which supply water to a fairly large area in the vicinity of the town."[1]

The old or indigenous method of irrigation was thus described by Gastrell[2]: "A small ridge or bandh is raised round each plot or field after the ground is considered sufficiently ploughed; the cultivator then lets in water from the tank, reservoir, or dammed-up *khāll* in which he has his water supply. This water is allowed to stand some time to assist in decomposing the *dhān* stubble and roots of the previous year, and to incorporate them and the manure more intimately with the soil." But owing to scarcity and unequal distribution of rains even such irrigation was hardly possible every year. Besides the *Subhankar Dānrā*, the two other old canals, the Kulāi Khāl in Simlapal thana and the Palāsbani canal in Ambikanagar deserve special mention. The former was constructed by the zemindars of Simlapal and a levy of four to seven *pāis* of paddy for each *bighā* (1,339 sq. metres) of irrigated land, according to its class, was charged by them from the tenants. The latter, a rather ambitious project, was constructed during the famine year of 1917. "It is about five miles in length and runs from Palasbani to the Kasai, which river it meets about a mile to the south of Ambikanagar. The canal was, however, never completed and at present serves no useful purpose."[3]

Extent of irrigation

The acreage under irrigation steadily increased in respect of some of the more important food crops between 1955-56 and 1958-59.

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[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. pp. 87-88.

[2] J. E. Gastrell—Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah. Calcutta, 1863.

[3] F. W. Robertson—Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura (1917-1924). p. 23.

In 1955-56 the irrigated area under rice was 2,84,000 acres while the same during the subsequent two years were 2,88,000 and 2,91,100 acres respectively. Similarly, the irrigated area under wheat increased from 7,500 acres in 1957-58 to 9,500 acres in 1958-59. The irrigated area under maize, barley and sugarcane remained more or less the same during these years but the irrigated area under other food crops rose from 4,000 acres in 1957-58 to 6,000 acres in 1958-59. It may be mentioned here that in 1959-60 the area irrigated in this district by the D.V.C. Right Bank Main Canal was 29,006 acres.

The area under assured artificial irrigation may be estimated at about 25 per cent of all the cultivable lands which will no doubt increase considerably with the completion of the Kangsabati and D.V.C. projects. As the rainfall is uncertain and the farmers of the district have to depend largely on the mercy of nature, attempts are being made to increase the area under assured irrigation through various irrigation projects, both major and minor, including deep tube-well schemes. Statistical information regarding irrigation by different methods is given in the table below.[1]

AREA UNDER DIFFERENT TYPES OF IRRIGATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT
(in acres)

Source of irrigation	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63
Tanks	2,00,000	1,90,300	1,86,000	1,82,500	1,78,800
Wells	2,800	2,800	2,700	2,800	3,000
Deep Tube-wells	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Canals: (a) Govt.	29,000	43,600	40,300	50,800	56,500
(b) Private	57,100	57,200	53,400	63,700	53,500
Other Sources	9,300	9,500	9,400	9,500	9,000

'N.A.' means 'Not available'.

Dams and canals

The D.V.C. projects

The occasional devastations caused by the fury of the Damodar have been largely brought under control through the construction of dams by the D.V.C. over the Konār, over the Barākar at Tilāiyā and Māithan and over the Damodar at Pānchet. As has already been pointed out in Chapter I, all these dams are in the upper reaches of the Damodar (and its tributaries) before it comes to form the northern boundary of the district. There is also a barrage across the Damodar from Durgapur in Burdwan district to Pratāppur in Bankura district which is about 700 metres long. This network of dams and barrages prevents overflow of water in the lower reaches of the river by narrowing down its channel during the rains and helps release regulated volumes of water during the dry season for irrigation. The Right Bank Main Canal, which runs for a total distance of 88 km. (55 miles) and has a head discharge of 2,271 cusecs, starts just above the

[1] Source; Statistical Officer, Socio-Economic & Evaluation Branch; Department of Agriculture & Community Development, West Bengal.

Durgapur Barrage and passes through Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas police stations before it enters the neighbouring district of Burdwan. The R. B. M. C. network (as it is briefly called) has already helped irrigate about 40,000 acres of land in Bankura district.

The total area in the district commanded by the Damodar Valley projects is about 431 sq. km. (168.5 sq. miles) of which the area irrigated is 78,723 acres. The total length of the main canal in the district is about 54 km. (34 miles) and that of its branches and distributaries 120 km. (75 miles). In 1958-59, the area irrigated under the D.V.C. command was only about 15,140 acres.

The Kangsabati Project

The Kangsabati Reservoir Project promises extensive irrigation facilities over wide areas in the districts of Bankura and Midnapur and a portion of Hooghly. The object of this scheme is chiefly irrigational, flood control being only a subsidiary aim. The estimated cost of the project is about Rs. 25.26 crores which may, in the long run, go up a little. Taken up under the Second Five Year Plan, the scheme is expected to offer irrigation facilities to a total *kharif* area of 8,00,000 acres and a *rabi* area of 1,50,000 acres in the districts of Bankura, Midnapur and Hooghly. In Bankura district, vast tracts in Onda, Kotulpur, Khatra, Raipur, Indpur, Bankura, Vishnupur, Joypur, Simlapal, Taldangra and Ranibandh thanas will be benefited after the scheduled completion of the project in 1970-71. Even before the finalization of the scheme, irrigation facilities would, in part, be extended to many of these police stations by the end of the Third Plan. Some 780 miles of canals will be excavated in Bankura district alone by the end of the project period and the total area that is likely to come under irrigation in this district after the completion of the scheme is estimated to be 4.16 lakh acres.

Other irrigation schemes

Some smaller irrigation schemes were put into operation immediately after independence, of which mention may be made of the following executed by the State Irrigation and Waterways Department, showing in each case the area irrigated and additional yield for the year 1958-59.[1]

Name of Scheme	Area irrigated (in acres)	Additional yield (in maunds)
Sālbāndh Weir & Canal	1,499	8,304
Rukni Khāl Irrigation Scheme	249	2,371
Āmjor Weir & Canal	600	10,701
Berāi Canal Irrigation Project	2,690	44,289
Kulāi Khāl Irrigation Scheme	869	17,517

[1] Source: Report of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division, Bankura for 1959.

Name of Scheme	Area irrigated (in acres)	Additional yield (in maunds)
Chāmkerā Khāl Irrigation Scheme	202	8,280
Bānsikhāl Irrigation Scheme	323	3,796
S. D. Scheme (Part II)	4,406	32,729
Molebāndh Irrigation Scheme	1,000	1,030
Bhorā Khāl Irrigation Scheme	1,414	8,793
Jhiku Khāl Irrigation Scheme	350	4,161
Weir on *jor* between Nanda and Ranga	121	1,068

In recent years many more small irrigation schemes have been implemented under the initiative of the Agriculture and Tank Improvement Departments. In 1960, the area irrigated in the district from 1,692 improved tanks was about 90,918 acres and that through 405 small irrigation schemes, executed between 1951 and 1960, was 30,000 acres. Minor irrigation schemes, in the form of *boro-bāndhs*, are also taken up now and then through test relief operations and they have also been helpful in augmenting agricultural production. In some parts of the district open wells are also used for *rabi* cultivation but these serve only a limited purpose. Tube-well irrigation is not generally suitable owing to the hard nature of the soil and the uneconomic cost of sinking them.

Artesian wells

The local agriculturists had for long the knowledge of the existence of favourable geological conditions along the Silābati and Joypāndā river basins in Indpur, Khatra, Taldangra and Simlapal police stations for digging of artesian wells. As is the case with artesian water everywhere, the water table at certain places of these police stations almost touches the ground level and even breaks through it as natural springs. Taking advantage of this natural phenomenon, borings, under the Small Irrigation Schemes of the Third Five Year Plan, were made by the Agriculture Department at 125 places in the aforesaid thanas. Contraptions called 'auto-flows' with 2" openings were sunk. Once sunk these devices produce for some length of time constant supply of water rising spontaneously to the surface. It must, however, be added that the 'auto-flows' are not working as had been expected. Either the limited reserves of sub-soil water are drying up or the borings have not been properly located.

In a discussion on the ground water regime in Bankura district, S. K. Munsi stressed the necessity of distinguishing two zones of underground water, namely 'the zone of free ground water' or 'phreatic' and 'deep pressure water', the source of artesian wells. Phreatic ground water occurs above the first impermeable stratum from the ground surface and the deep pressure water, below the said stratum. The zone of maximum fluctuation of ground water lies

along the western part of the district and decreases eastward. The different rates of fluctuations have been found to depend on the influences of relief, nearness to non-perennial streams which becomes suddenly active during monsoon and the amount of forest coverage. Measurement of water tables in wells in dry and rainy seasons revealed that there are three areas of low and medium fluctuations, namely (*a*) on the southern bank of the Damodar in P. S. Mejia and northern third of P. S. Gangajalghati; (*b*) along the western margin of P. S. Indpur around mauza Gilirbanā and (*c*) at the centre of P. S. Ranibandh along a line running north-west to south-east from Mākhnu to Dhānjhār. There are two areas of pronounced fluctuations, namely (*a*) the southern half of P. S. Chhatna and western third of P. S. Bankura and (*b*) the whole of Khatra and small portions of adjoining Indpur and Taldangra police stations.[1]

Lift irrigation and *Jor-bāndhs*

Practically all the rivers of the district can be tapped for agricultural purposes through lift irrigation. Already eight such schemes have been put into operation. There is also a good scope for utilizing the large number of *jors* (small streams) flowing through the district by throwing *bāndhs* or embankments across them. One such *jor* has been harnessed in recent years at Rājbāndh to bring more than 1,000 acres of land under perennial irrigation.

Tank improvement work

In Bankura there are large *bāndhs* all over the district where the damming up of the natural lines of drainage results in the formation of reservoirs which are utilized for irrigating neighbouring fields. This has been in vogue from very early times. In 1940 the Tank Improvement Department came into existence with the purpose of re-excavating silted up tanks (as also *bāndhs*) and making them fit for irrigation. Between 1940 and 1952 as many as 1,354 tanks were taken up for improvement. In such projects the cost of re-excavation is met partly by the beneficiaries and partly by Government. Remissions up to 50 per cent of the total costs are allowed by Government, the remaining 50 per cent being realized by imposing water rates on lands benefited by the tanks and also by leasing out the tanks for pisciculture. The programme also serves to engage a large number of labourers during periods of scarcity. Although the district is not frequently visited by floods, cyclones or invasions by locusts, drought is a frequent occurrence underlining the great need for a wide network of small irrigation projects.

Among the benefits to be derived after improvement of tanks under the West Bengal Tank Improvement Act are the following: (*i*) increase in the annual production of paddy, (*ii*) reclamation of cultivable waste lands, (*iii*) increase in the yield of winter crops, (*iv*) pisciculture and (*v*) production of vegetables on the banks.

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[1] S. K. Munsi—'Free ground-water regime over the Bankura Shield' in Proceedings of the Fifty-fifth Indian Science Congress. Part III—Abstracts. Calcutta, 1968. pp. 266-67.

Bankura being a dry district, the number of tanks excavated there by the Tank Improvement Department is fairly large. Prior to independence, from 1941-42 up to the 14th of August 1947, the number of tanks improved under the provisions of the B.T.I. Act was 788. From 15.8.47 to 1955-56, the corresponding number was 835 costing Rs. 28,43,188 and benefiting 34,572 acres. The number of tanks improved between 1956-57 and 1958-59 was 67, the area benefited being 2,896 acres at an expenditure of Rs. 2,07,829.

Recently, a number of schemes has been taken up by the Tank Improvement Department and the Department of Fisheries jointly for increasing agricultural production and developing pisciculture in the district. Tanks are departmentally selected and their owners are given loans under certain conditions for their development. These schemes are being implemented at present through the Development Blocks of the district.

Extent of irrigation

The following two tables[1] will indicate the extent of irrigation facilities available in the district.

AREA UNDER IRRIGATED CROPS IN BANKURA DISTRICT
(in acres)

Name of crop	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63
Rice	2,71,200	2,86,100	2,81,400
Wheat	6,800	10,200	6,000
Barley	700	700	600
Jowar	100	100	100
Maize	2,800	2,200	2,000
Other cereals and pulses	3,100	3,200	3,300
Sugarcane	3,500	4,000	4,000
Other food crops including fruits and vegetables	6,200	6,200	6,300
Total	2,94,400	3,12,700	3,03,700

AREA IRRIGATED THROUGH DIFFERENT AGENCIES IN BANKURA DISTRICT
(in acres)

Year	Government canals	Private canals	Tanks	Wells	Other sources	Total
1960-61	40,300	53,400	1,86,000	2,700	9,400	2,91,800
1961-62	50,800	63,700	1,82,500	2,800	9,500	3,09,300
1962-63	56,500	53,500	1,78,800	3,000	9,000	3,00,800

[1] Source: Statistical Officer, Socio-Economic & Evaluation Branch, Department of Agriculture & Community Development, West Bengal.

Soils

The district of Bankura, forming the connecting link between the Chotanagpur plateau and the alluvial plains of Bengal, lends itself eminently to the study of its soils with their varying geological deposits, macro and micro reliefs and vegetation. The general climate does not vary too much to be a major factor in effecting differences in the soils of the district. Geological formations, on the other hand, range from the Archaean era to the Recent. The representations are, however, not continuous but belong to four eras providing variations in stratigraphy. The rocks of the Archaean era are both of basic and acid types. The greater portion of the district towards the east is covered by laterite and alluvium, whereas towards the west are exposed ancient metamorphic rocks like gneiss and schist and rocks of Supra-Panchet, Panchet and Raniganj series belonging to the Gondwana system. The relief comprises of hills in the form of monadnocks and undulating plateaus grading into the more or less flat alluvial plains. The general slope is towards the Damodar lying on the north and north-east with a comparatively smaller part sloping southward towards the Dwarakeswar, Silabati and Kangsabati. Excluding the areas under paddy and sporadically distributed small trees, the remaining terrain is mostly covered up by *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) and *palās* (*Butea frondosa*), especially in the upland reaches. Besides, there are large tracts bare of vegetative cover where features of soil erosion are visible even to the untrained eye.[1] In many areas, again, laterite gravel and calcareous *kankar* occur extensively both on the surface and in the sub-surface soil.

It is apparent, therefore, that under such extremely varying conditions of soil forming factors, divergent soil types would emerge, the genetic and evolutionary history of which is worth a brief study.

The Soil Survey Unit under the Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal, prepared in 1962 a set of schematic soil maps of Bankura district. These were essentially soil association maps on which the soil textures were superimposed. (These maps being multi-coloured and too big in size could not be used in the present Gazetteer—Ed.). In 1956, S. N. Mukherji had also carried out extensive investigations on the soils of the district.[2] The following observations are mainly based on these findings.

Broadly speaking, Bankura has three distinct types of soils—red, laterite and alluvial. As one proceeds from east to west of the district, a regular sequence from flood plain alluvium to purely lateritic soil is noticed. The Damodar flatland as also the upland

[1] A 'Soil-cum-capability-cum-present-land-use survey of Silabati watershed', comprising parts of Purulia and Bankura districts and commanding an area of 40,000 acres, was conducted by the Directorate of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal and the report was incorporated in the Annual Progress Report of the Scheme for Soil Conservation Survey and Land Use Planning, 1963-64.

[2] S. N. Mukherji—A Brief Agricultural Geography of West Bengal. Calcutta, 1956.

soils have their common source of origin and are classified under the general family name of 'Vindhyan Alluvium'. Mukherji specified the following six textural types of soils in the district:

Textural Type	Local Name
Heavy Clay	*Enṭelmāṭi*
Clay (medium & light)	*Kādāmāṭi*
Clay Loam	*Doānshmāṭi* or *Enṭel Doānsh*
Loam	*Doānsh*
Sandy Loam	*Bele Doānsh*
Sand	*Bele* or *Belemāṭi*

On the basis of the initial state of the composing materials, the soils of Bankura fall into two main groups, namely (*i*) sedentary, i.e. soils formed from residual parent materials and (*ii*) transported, i.e. soils formed from transported parent materials. According to the constituent materials, sedentary soils may be further sub-divided into (*a*) sandstone soils, (*b*) gneissic soils, (*c*) schistose soils and (*d*) lateritic soils. Similarly, transported soils may be further sub-divided into (*a*) colluvial soils and (*b*) alluvial soils.

In terms of soil colour, the sedentary soils of the district may be divided into two types, namely red-coloured and brown-coloured soils. The former found mainly on laterites supporting *sāl* vegetation are free from $CaCo_3$, low in base exchange capacity and have a highly unsaturated base. Being rich in kaolinite type of mineral, the SiO_2/Al_2O_3 ratio of this kind of clay varies between 2 and 3 which indicates that it may be derived from the laterites by a process of resilicification by ascending ground water. "Although the process of laterisation is vivid, these soils cannot be grouped either as laterite or as lateritic soils."[1] Red soils also occur along the margins of small hills bare of vegetation which, however, differ from those discussed above in having comparatively higher exchangeable calcium and comparatively higher silica-alumina ratio. The brown soils, on the other hand, are mainly derived from rocks like sandstone, granite, gneiss and schists etc. and are generally under cultivation. They may be of non-calcareous and calcareous categories. The former is free from calcium carbonate accumulation being derived from parent materials poor in lime. This type may be re-grouped as reddish or lateritic depending on the silica-alumina ratio, silica-sesquioxide ratio, base exchange capacity and exchangeable percentage of lime. In the lateritic soils, ferruginous concretions occur in a definite layer whereas in the red soils they are distributed throughout the profile which makes for all the difference. The calcareous brown soil differs from the red soil type in having $CaCO_3$ at different depths of

[1] 'Annual Progress Report on the Scheme for Soil Conservation Survey and Land-use Planning, 1963-64', published by the Directorate of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal. p. 4.

the profile in the form of lime and *kankar*. It cannot be grouped along with black soils[1] due to lower silica-sesquioxide ratio, lower base exchange capacity and very low percentage of lime (4%). Calcareous brown soils having more than 15% of exchangeable sodium in the top layer has been separately grouped as alkaline soil. The two preceding categories, representing the young soil type of the district, may also be classified as immature red soil.

There is no separate classification for alluvial soils which have been grouped, according to soil association, as Damodar upland, Damodar flatland etc. A more precise classification is, however, possible by differentiating between the old and the new alluvium types. The old alluvium remains unaffected by floods and siltation and is characterized by profile development. The young alluvial soils, showing very little profile development, are refreshed with silt deposits during floods. Some of them, mainly occurring in the Damodar flatlands, are affected by a high water table and are characterized by a heavy sub-soil and occurrence of brown concretions in the lower depths.

Land-use pattern

From the east to the west of the district, the land-use pattern undergoes a pronounced change varying with differing soil conditions. The alluvial tracts to the east are best suited for cultivation of crops which require a good amount of moisture and most of this area is double-cropped. *Patit dāngā* or unculturable waste lands are not frequently met with here although sheet and gully erosion of the slopes and banks of drainage channels have rendered some of these areas totally unfit for cultivation. Such lands with their rock outcrops and scattered *kankars* are so difficult for agriculture that they are either left fallow or are heavily grazed. The *bait* type of land, occurring at a level lower than that of the *patit dāngā*, is covered with sandy loam and is given to paddy cultivation, the yield of which varies now from 2.6 to 4.5 quintals per acre due to the uncertainties of availability of moisture. The *kānāli* lands are at a still lower positional level and, with an assured moisture supply, are given to paddy cultivation, the average yield per acre ranging from 5.6 to 7.8 quintals at present. The cultivation of sugarcane and potatoes is also mainly concentrated in the alluvial tracts. In between the *kānāli* and the marshy areas, where the water table is very high and the surface moisture ample, occurs the *sol* or *bahāl* type of land with loamy moist or clayey soils suitable for cultivation of paddy and summer vegetables. But abundance of moisture adversely affects crop yields in years of heavy rainfall, otherwise, such lands produce from 7.8 to 9.6 quintals of paddy per acre under current conditions

[1] Dark grey to dark olive grey coloured soils found in the valleys of the Silabati watershed with neutral to alkaline reaction and with loam to clay texture may be classified as margalitic soil. In the Silabati watershed, profiles of the lowest terraces are margalitic in character whereas the higher ones are lateritic.

Laterite soils are covered mostly by *sāl* forests and only small patchy clearings amidst them are available for agriculture. With increasing pressure of population, however, deforestation has progressed at an alarming rate in the district and much of the area under lateritic soils, especially in Raipur police station, has since been brought under cultivation. Of the red soils, those formed from schistose associations offer a larger area for agriculture than red soils of other associations.

AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

Local names of soils and crops grown on them

In the Sadar subdivision, the local names for different classes of soil and the crops grown on them are as follows. The lowest tracts lying in the valleys and depressions, where rain-water percolates from neighbouring uplands rendering them sufficiently moist, are called *sol* or *sāli* lands which are best suited for growing *āman* paddy. The lands just above these on the rise of the slopes are known as *kānāli* lands which are also capable of producing good winter paddy. Terraced lands higher up the slopes constitute the *bait* lands which depend largely on good and evenly distributed rainfall for producing crops that might fail altogether in a bad year. Unterraced uplands growing a scanty *rabi* crop represent the *tarā* or *dāngā* lands which are of little use from the agricultural point of view.

In the Vishnupur subdivision, the alluvial soils are broadly classified into *sāli* and *sunā* lands. While the former are mainly used for the cultivation of paddy, the latter produce various crops, such as sugarcane, oil-seeds and superior varieties of rice. In the richest *sunā* lands tobacco, betel-leaves and vegetables are also grown. Another important difference between these two kinds of land is worthy of mention. While *sāli* lands are allowed to lie fallow every third or fourth year, the *sunā* lands never remain uncultivated.

Major and subsidiary crops

Rice is the main food crop of the district and occupies about 90 per cent of the net cropped area. The following table would give an idea of the volume of production of the principal crop in relation to other important food and non-food crops of the district between 1960-61 and 1964-65.

NET CROPPED AREA UNDER PRINCIPAL CROPS IN BANKURA DISTRICT
(in thousand acres)

Year	Paddy	Wheat	Potato	Jute
1960-61	803.9	7.7	4.9	1.3
1961-62	811.7	11.6	5.9	2.4
1962-63	802.1	7.3	4.6	4.5
1963-64	798.1	11.4	6.1	3.2
1964-65	835.7	5.4	5.2	2.4

Winter paddy (*āman*) is grown throughout the district while summer paddy grows in the relatively higher lands in the west. The cultivators raise pulses and oil-seeds in plots around their homesteads for local consumption only. Potatoes and vegetables are produced in good quantity on the banks of rivers and canals, especially in the north of Barjora police station on the riparian lands south of the Damodar river. Maize is mostly grown in Raipur and Ranibandh thanas on lands adjoining dwelling houses. It is an important subsidiary food of the Santals and poorer sections of the people. Sugarcane is cultivated usually on the banks of canals for facilities of irrigation. This crop, however, requires careful attention which includes frequent manuring and constant irrigation.

The crops and their seasons

The crops in Bankura are classified, according to their respective harvesting seasons, into three broad categories: *bhādoi* or *āus* is the autumn crop, *aghrāni* or *āman* is the winter crop and *rabi* is the late winter crop.

Āman rice, which is the principal crop of the district, is sown in April or May, transplanted in July or August and reaped around December. The soil requires to be ploughed four times before the seed is sown. The first ploughing takes place early in February or March and is followed by three others by August. The process of sowing, weeding and reaping is the same here as in other parts of Bengal.

Āus or autumn rice is sown or broadcast in the fields in May and reaped in September. It is of two varieties in Bankura district, namely *āus* proper and *kelāsh*. The season for the *rabi* crops is from October to April approximately and they include wheat, rape, mustard and other oil-seeds, *arahar*, peas and gram. *Pān* or the betel-leaf is another important crop sown in the month of June or July, the leaves being picked at all seasons of the year after the plant is some months old. The following table would indicate the sowing, harvesting and marketing cycle of some of the important crops of the district.

Name of crop	Period of sowing	Period of harvesting	Period of marketing
Āman paddy	July-August	November-January	December-June
Āus paddy	June-July	September-October	November-December
Wheat	October-November	March-April	April-May
Jute	April-May	September-October	October-December
Sugarcane	March-April	February-March	April-October
Potato	November-December	February-April	April-June

The table[1] below would indicate the total cropped area, the yield per acre and the total production of principal crops of the district over the five-year period from 1961-62 to 1965-66:

Year	Name of crop	Cropped area (in thousand acres)	Yield per acre (in maunds)	Total production (in thousand tons)
1961-62	*Āman* Rice	711.5	14.52	379.5
	Āus Rice	98.2	8.15	29.4
	Potato	5.9	74.48	16.1
	Jute*	2.4	2.98	7.2
	Sugarcane	7.0	387.02	99.5
	Wheat	11.6	8.48	3.6
1962-63	*Āman* Rice	699.0	12.92	331.8
	Āus Rice	101.1	7.36	27.3
	Potato	4.6	77.63	13.1
	Jute*	4.5	3.02	13.6
	Sugarcane	5.2	720.03	137.6
	Wheat	7.3	4.65	1.2
1963-64	*Āman* Rice	688.7	15.22	385.1
	Āus Rice	107.4	10.49	41.4
	Potato	6.1	61.84	13.9
	Jute*	3.2	2.90	9.3
	Sugarcane	5.5	468.16	94.6
	Wheat	11.4	4.76	2.0
1964-65	*Āman* Rice	742.1	15.75	429.4
	Āus Rice	109.4	10.20	41.0
	Potato	5.2	96.62	18.5
	Jute*	2.4	3.39	8.1
	Sugarcane	9.8	620.80	223.5
	Wheat	5.4	5.92	1.2
1965-66	*Āman* Rice	722.3	12.61	334.6
	Āus Rice	98.0	8.33	30.0
	Potato	5.5	116.92	23.6
	Jute*	3.4	2.52	8.6
	Sugarcane	6.3	550.38	127.4
	Wheat	5.6	6.57	1.4

[1] Source: Statistical Officer, Socio-Economic & Evaluation Branch, Department of Agriculture & Community Development, West Bengal.
* Yield rates and production figures are in terms of bales of 400 lbs. each.

PROGRESS OF SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURE

In a district as poor and backward as Bankura, the importance of scientific agricultural methods cannot be gainsaid and, happily, this matter began to attract added official notice immediately after independence. During the First Plan period, small irrigation projects were taken up through the distribution of pumping sets. Prizes, at Union level, to the best growers of paddy and, at the thana level, to the best producers of wheat were introduced. Demonstration centres were established to educate the cultivators about better yields through the application of chemical fertilizers. During the Second Plan, agricultural activities in the district were intensified. Establishment of Thana Seed Farms, expansion of the area under *boro* paddy, wheat and potato by constructing small temporary *jor-bāndhs* and introduction of a number of improved methods of cultivation in the farmers' holdings were some of the salient features of the new approach to agriculture. By the end of the Second Five Year Plan, as many as 16 Thana Seed Farms were established in the district spread over the police stations of Barjora, Ranibandh, Sonamukhi, Indas, Vishnupur and Joypur. A big agricultural farm, comprising an area of 317 acres, was also started at the foot of the Susunia hill. During 1959, about 933 quintals of improved paddy seeds, amongst others, were distributed to cultivators from these seed farms. Over the years, the position in this behalf has continued to improve and the entire requirement of improved paddy seeds is now being almost met from within the district. Extension of the cultivation of *boro* paddy as a second crop after the harvesting of *āman* rice was also a new enterprise taken up in 1957. Before 1957 the area under *boro* paddy in the district was negligible although the large number of rivulets flowing through the district could be harnessed on a wider scale and utilized for irrigation purposes. The idea of throwing cross bunds over these water channels and utilization of the accumulated water for growing of additional crops, namely *boro* paddy, wheat, potato, vegetables etc., however, took shape and by the end of 1957, as many as 47 *rabi*-cum-*boro* bunds were constructed. With the water thus made available, it was possible to grow *boro* paddy on about 800 acres, other miscellaneous crops like wheat, vegetables etc. on about 650 acres giving an yield of 6,616 quintals of *boro* paddy and 24,258 quintals of vegetables and other crops, the total market value of which was about Rs. 4,82,000 at the time. In 1958-59, 200 *rabi*-cum-*boro* bunds were completed adding to the benefits already derived. With the extension of irrigation facilities, the acreage under *boro* paddy rose to 1,600 acres, potato to 5,500 acres and wheat to 12,000 acres during 1958-59 against 800, 4,500 and 10,000 acres respectively during 1956-57.[1]

During the Second Plan period, about 17,000 acres of land were

[1] Source: Annual Report of the Superintendent of Agriculture, Bankura, 1959.

brought under the Japanese method of cultivation while seeds, manures and implements were supplied to the cultivators at a 50% subsidy. Green manuring was also introduced. With the availability of better irrigation facilities from the D.V.C. canals, *jor-bāndhs*, tanks and other minor irrigation schemes, the demand for fertilizers has considerably increased. Training of village leaders was taken up in the C.D. Blocks with a view to spreading the knowledge of scientific methods of agriculture. Extensive reclamation of high waste lands and raising of vegetables like pumpkin and tomato as also cultivation of maize and other inferior cereals are now common in all parts of the district.

Intensive Agricultural Area Programme

Bankura was one of the nine districts in West Bengal where the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme was launched in 1964-65 with the object of arranging intensive cultivation in selected areas through the assistance of increased staff, manures, fertilizers, plant protection materials and improved implements. Formerly, the District Agricultural Officer was alone responsible for the execution of the agricultural programme in his district. For proper implementation of the aforesaid scheme, the appointment of three additional specialists, one for agricultural information and two for agronomy and plant protection has been approved by the Government of India. The essence of this novel project is similar to that of the Package Programme which envisages improvement of farming methods in each holding directly with the help of individual cultivators and supported by all available facilities for a rapid increase in food production—the approved farm plans being taken as the basis for extending credit for purchasing additional fertilizers, pesticides and other supplies needed for the augmentation of agricultural output.

In 1964-65, the Blocks covered by the Intensive Rice Cultivation Area Programme were Vishnupur and Joypur in the Vishnupur subdivision. In 1966-67, two more Blocks, Khatra-I and Khatra-II within the Bankura subdivision, were scheduled to come under this Programme. In the first phase, several 'project' mauzas under the police stations of Barjora, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer, Indas and Kotulpur have been selected where farmers are getting more credit facilities for purchase of seeds, fertilizers, implements, pesticides etc. through the local co-operatives. All these facilities for boosting agricultural production could not so far be provided simultaneously even in the best of areas. In these select mauzas, the farmers are trained in batches both in the fields at the time of actual demonstrations as also in the training camps.

The scheme for intensive cultivation of paddy naturally forms the core of the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme. During 1964-65, such priority cultivation of paddy covered 3,000 acres in 280 villages of the district benefiting 750 cultivator families for which 578 quintals of improved paddy seeds were distributed. During the same year,

982.5 metric tons of ammonium sulphate, 14.2 metric tons of urea, 99.6 metric tons of super-phosphate, 116.8 metric tons of bone-meal, 2,624.3 metric tons of paddy mixture, 78,527 metric tons of compost and 22.4 metric tons of green manure seeds were distributed not only for the improvement of paddy cultivation but also for increasing the output of other food crops. During the same period, Rs. 3,28,621 was made available for minor irrigation projects and 30 new tube-wells, 213 wells and 10 tanks were dug for boosting agricultural production. Plant protection measures were also simultaneously introduced and we find from statistics supplied by the Directorate of Agriculture that during 1964-65, 2,731 hectares, out of a target of 3,895, were brought under such protective schemes. About 304 metric tons of treated seeds were also distributed over the same period. The total quantity of pesticides made available to farmers during the year amounted to 38 metric tons.

Agricultural implements

The traditional agricultural implements are still in general use in the district mainly due to the poverty of the farmers who have often to borrow or hire bullocks and even ploughs for the same reason. Ploughs of the indigenous type constitute the main animal-drawn agricultural implement. Spades, pick-axes and sickles are also used. All these simple tools are made locally by the village blacksmiths and carpenters. Efforts were made in the recent past by the Department of Agriculture to replace such old gear by improved appliances but the progress made in this behalf has been rather limited. Modern contrivances like paddy-weeders, wheel-hoes, seed-drills and mould-board ploughs were, in the first stage, sold by Government, without any subsidy, through the demonstration centres resulting in a very poor offtake. Provisions have now been made for popularization and distribution of improved agricultural implements at a subsidy of 50 per cent of the cost. Until recently, these implements were manufactured and supplied by firms in Calcutta which did not have any distributing agencies in the district. The local farmers were consequently unable to procure the modern gear or their spare parts readily. Suitable arrangements for their supply have now been made and a fitter mechanic has been attached to each Block office for attending to all repair works on receipt of requisitions from the cultivators.

Seeds and manures

Agronomic experiments show that rice yields cannot increase unless good paddy seeds are made available to the farmers in time. Optimum results also call for timely ploughing, proper weeding, adequate spacing of the seedlings and their transplantation at the correct time of the season. By and large, the poor cultivators of the district were, until recently, unable to keep a part of their seeds earmarked for use in the next season and their dependence in this behalf on the *mahajans* or rich cultivators had been a regular feature of the agrarian economy. This unhealthy state of affairs has, however, significantly changed in recent years. Improved varieties of seeds (mostly paddy) are now

being supplied to the cultivators from the Thana Seed Farms and seed stores and local co-operative societies are also working as agencies for storing and distributing them. Steps have also been taken to set up seed stores in the various C.D. Blocks to make improved seeds available to the cultivators in time. By the end of 1965, 9 such seed stores were established in the district, 2 in Kotulpur, 3 in Joypur and 2 apiece in Vishnupur and Onda police stations. Under the Seed Saturation Scheme, now being implemented through the Development Blocks in the district, selected cultivators get improved varieties of seeds from the nearest co-operative or seed store and these are then sown in the specified seed-beds for multiplication. While the selected farmers keep a part of the new seeds for their own use during the next season, a portion is entrusted to the local co-operative society or the Extension Officer of the Block concerned for distribution amongst other cultivators for further multiplication. An entire village is thus gradually 'saturated' through seed multiplication at various levels under the supervision of the agricultural staff working in the Development Blocks. In Bankura, the erstwhile inferior varieties of seeds have now been replaced to a fair extent by improved strains which, it may be added, are treated with suitable chemicals before they are finally sown. The quality seeds come from the eight Seed Multiplication Farms located at Vishnupur, Joypur, Indas, Patrasayer, Sonamukhi, Barjora, Saltora and Ranibandh. Besides these, the big seed farm at Susunia—which covers an area of 317 acres against an average of about 160 acres under other District Seed Farms in the State—meets a large part of the requirements of improved seeds in the district.

In recent years, a good deal of attention has been paid for increasing village compost production under a scheme for augmenting local manurial resources. This scheme envisages construction of an adequate number of compost pits for every village, the target being at least one pit for each family. The Village-Level Workers attached to the C.D. Blocks of the district help the farmers to appreciate that paddy fields need thorough manuring if better yields are desired. The importance of the Green Manure Scheme is also being stressed and adequate quantities of *dhainchā* seeds are being supplied to the cultivators for this purpose. Although cow dung continues to be the principal manure so far, other organic manures and fertilizers, namely sulphate of ammonia, urea, bone-meal, oil-cakes and fertilizer-mixtures are gradually finding favour with the villagers. Trial demonstrations are held in the Development Blocks to convince the cultivators of the efficacy of such fertilizers. Under another scheme, known as the Town Compost Scheme, the three municipalities of the district are to start work on an extensive scale. The number of fertilizer depots has considerably increased in the recent past indicating that farmers of the district are generally becoming fertilizer-

minded. In December 1965, there were as many as 323 such depots and co-operative marketing societies handling fertilizers numbered 36. Most of the fertilizer distributing depots are located in the villages ensuring prompt supply to the actual users. In order to make the whole distribution arrangement mass-oriented, the co-operative societies get preference over private depot-holders in respect of supplies when there is a shortage of the commodities normally handled by commercial firms approved by and working under the direct supervision of the State Government.

There is no agricultural research centre in the district as such. But mention may be made in this connexion of the State Agricultural Farm in Bankura town which is engaged in certain investigations regarding rice and other cereals.

Plant protection measures, particularly in the case of paddy, may be either preventive or curative or both. On the preventive side, it is possible to treat the unhealthy seeds with various kinds of chemicals to arrest their growth thus ensuring immunity to the paddy field as a whole. On the curative side, the pests which affect the plants can be destroyed if the fields are submerged under water for about 12 hours. Where there is no such scope for release of water, the crops can also be freed from the attack of pests by dusting them with B.H.C. 10% at the rate of 6.8 kg. per acre. Paddy crop is often attacked by fungus diseases resulting in loss of yield. This can be combated by treating the seeds with Agrosan G.N. or using resistant varieties of seeds instead. Late blight in potatoes also cause much damage to this cash crop. Insecticides and fungicides are now being used by cultivators under the guidance of Village-Level Workers and agricultural staff attached to the Development Blocks of the district. Sprayers and dusters are sold from Government stocks to those who need them and demonstrations are arranged from time to time to train the farmers in plant protection work. There is, besides, a District Plant Protection Unit which renders all possible assistance when called for. That the common cultivators are gradually becoming insecticide-conscious is apparent from the fair demand for D.D.T. 50%, B.H.C. 10%, Agrosan G.N., Endrin and Malathiam which have proved their worth in fighting diseases affecting paddy and other crops. Copper oxychloride (Blitox) is widely used for saving the potato crop; in 1964-65 about 4,000 acres under potatoes were covered by this protective mixture.

While monkeys, rats or other rodents are the common animal pests, parrots and sparrows also cause a lot of damage to crops. Among the insect pests mention may be made of the Rice Hispa, the Rice Stem Borer and the Paddy Ear Bug which affect paddy; the Jute Semilooper, the Jute Hairy Caterpillar and the Jute Mite which damage jute plants; the Root Borer, the Top Shoot Borer and the Termite which cause injury to sugarcane; the Cut-worm, the Late

Blight and the Early Blight which ruin potato crops; the Aphids which harm mustard plants and the White Fly which ravage betel-leaf plantations. According to the figures furnished by the Directorate of Agriculture, more and more lands are being brought under plant protection measures; the target for the year 1964-65 was 15,400 acres in the district while the area actually covered was 9,970 acres.

Role of co-operatives

The ordinary cultivators of the district, particularly of the poorer classes, are still very much within the grip of unscrupulous money-lenders and this fact brings to the fore the important role that co-operative societies can play in our agrarian economy. Monetary advances to meet the farmers' current requirements are generally made by the local *mahājans* both in cash and in kind, the latter being usually repayable according to the *sawāi* system, i.e. 1¼ times the advance made has to be returned by the borrower. In the case of cash loans, it is generally implied that the produce should be sold to the creditor at a stipulated rate lower than that prevailing in the market at the time in addition to usurious interests varying between 12½% and 25% per annum. Providing a strong contrast to these practices, the co-operative marketing societies of the district and the State-owned warehouse at Vishnupur advance loans to cultivators, against their pledged stocks, up to a maximum of 65 to 75% of the current market value of the produce at a 10% rate of interest, which is very moderate.

The quantum of agrarian finance provided by all types of co-operative organizations in the district does not, however, exceed a quarter of that advanced by the *mahājans* and the money-lenders. The co-operative movement has, therefore, to make much headway yet as the traditional system of rural finance still holds its ground even in localities where co-operative societies exist. Since the holding capacity of most of the poorer cultivators is practically nil, the State Government is reported to be finalizing arrangements now to offer improved credit facilities to them to help increase their holding power.

Only about 8 per cent of the total population distributed unevenly over approximately 65 per cent of the villages of the district had come under the co-operative fold by 1964-65. Production loans are advanced through the Primary as well as the Large-sized Credit Societies which numbered 800 in all on June 30, 1964 and all types of loans disbursed through them during 1964-65 aggregated 20 lakhs of rupees. The rate of interest charged by the apex organization, the West Bengal Provincial Co-operative Bank, from the Central Bank is 4% and that charged by the latter from individual co-operative societies is 7% whereas the societies levy an interest of 10% on their constituent members.

On the co-operative marketing side, there are 9 large-sized and 5 small-sized co-operative marketing societies in the district. There is also a Co-operative Creamery Society at Peardoba in Vishnupur

subdivision which is reported to be functioning well in an area inhabited mostly by tribal people. It is engaged mainly in the collection and processing of milk which is fetched by carriers appointed by the society from neighbouring Santal villages. A grant of Rs 6,363 was made by Government to this organization in 1964 for purchase of equipments.

Following is a statement[1] showing a Blockwise break-up of short-term co-operative loan (*Kharif* Crop Loan) distributed during 1965-66.

Name of Block	Amount (in Rs.)
Indas	1,80,800
Sonamukhi	54,775
Patrasayer	1,25,854
Kotulpur	1,64,440
Joypur	57,000
Vishnupur	71,015
Barjora	39,070
Raipur-II	1,13,415
Raipur-I	70,440
Simlapal	27,350
Taldangra	20,000
Onda	68,000
Total	9,92,159

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERIES

Area under fodder crops

There is practically no land in the district kept earmarked for growing fodder crops. In his District Settlement Report published in 1926, Robertson had pointed out that in the past the forests were the only grazing grounds and that thriftless and unscientific way in which these were allowed to be cut, made grazing there very sparse.[2] With the imposition of stringent forest laws, the already slender grazing resources of the forests went beyond the reach of the common people and the problem has become very acute in recent years. In the east, especially in Indas and Kotulpur thanas, scarcity of food has forced extension of cultivation on to the pastures making grazing impossible when the crops are on the fields. As in most other districts of the State, paddy straw is the principal fodder for cattle in Bankura and that too is not available throughout the year.

In order to overcome this difficulty, crop rotation schemes and mixed farming are being encouraged. Improved fodder seeds for use both in *kharif* and *rabi* seasons are also distributed at subsidized rates among the people of the district. During the First Plan period, 83.9 quintals of allotted seeds yielded 27,990 quintals of fodder benefiting 202 families and up to 1958 of the Second Plan period, 384.4 quintals of seeds were distributed yielding 1,32,019.5 quintals of fodder which benefited 956 families.

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[1] Source: Project Executive Officer, Bankura.

[2] F. W. Robertson—Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura (1917-1924).

Silos

During the Second Five Year Plan, a new scheme for the construction of silo-pits was introduced among the grass growers of the district for feeding their cattle and improving their stock. A silo is an air-tight structure in which green crops are pressed and kept for fodder. It may be above the ground when it is called a tower silo or underground when it forms a silo-pit. Tower silos are expensive to construct whereas underground silos are cheap and easy to make. Their dimensions vary according to the requirements of individual farmers as also the quantities of fodder to be preserved. Silos preserve fodder in a fleshy state so that cattle can have succulent fodder all the year round. Cattle-feed prepared in a silo is nutritious and is eaten without any waste. Green fodder can be preserved throughout the summer months in silo-pits with accretion to its food value.[1] The State Government provides a subsidy of Rs. 50 for the construction of each silo-pit and against a target of 276 silo-pits during the Second Plan period, 101 were built up to August 1958 preserving 1,679.4 quintals of green fodder. During 1960-61, 48.5 quintals of seeds and cuttings were distributed among the villagers for cultivation of cattle-feed. Demonstrations of fodder cultivation methods and of ensilage operations were also arranged and during the same year about 70 such demonstrations were held. Greater stress was laid on this programme during the Third Five Year Plan and 163 quintals of seed were distributed during 1964-65.

The fodder problem in Bankura still remains acute as the schemes enumerated above hardly meet the requirements of the district adequately. The ordinary villager is a very poor man and he cannot buy all his needs of fodder which sells at a high price. It has not yet been possible either to persuade the generality of cultivators to use some of their lands for fodder production. The Animal Husbandry Department has also made no arrangements so far to cultivate fodder on a large scale in the district.

Livestock and measures to improve quality of breeds

In 1956 the district had a total livestock population of 13,55,469 consisting of 2,38,571 cattle, 27,641 buffaloes, 64,634 sheep, 3,34,899 goats, 23,682 pigs and only 100 horses.[2] They were mostly of poor breeds and it is only in recent years that attempts are being made to improve their quality through cross-breeding and artificial insemination. In his District Settlement Report of 1926, Robertson remarked: "The difficulties in the way of improving the breed are enormous. To import bulls of a good stock in sufficient numbers would be far too expensive. An odd bull here and there would be of little use. It is possible that something may be done in the future through the village Panchayats." The village panchayats have since come into existence and the rural areas of the district have been

[1] Intensive Agriculture—published by the Farm Information Unit, Ministry of Food & Agriculture. New Delhi, 1964.
[2] Livestock Census, 1956.

divided into 22 Development Blocks where veterinary units are working under Veterinary Assistant Surgeons for the implementation of a number of schemes initiated by the Dairy Development and Animal Husbandry wing of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services. On the eve of the launching of the Community Development movement, there was only one Veterinary Assistant Surgeon in each subdivision of the district and his work was limited merely to the control of contagious livestock diseases. It was then impossible for the officers to treat the animals suffering from general diseases as all their time was used up in eradicating epidemics. The position has since considerably improved. There is now a veterinary dispensary at each Block headquarters under the charge of one Veterinary Assistant Surgeon and two aid centres in each Block located in the interior villages to cope with emergency cases. In the C.D. Blocks there are also artificial insemination centres which are popular with the cattle owners. The veterinary dispensaries in the Development Blocks are adequately stocked with medicines and appliances for effective treatment and control of various cattle diseases. Anthrax, Black Quarter, foot and mouth diseases are the usual infectious ailments of cattle, while Fowl Cholera, Ranikhet Disease and Fowl Pox are the maladies affecting poultry. Animals are vaccinated against contagious diseases and preventive inoculations are given to poultry. Apart from the services rendered at these stationary centres, veterinary aid is now extended to the door-steps of the cultivators through a mobile clinic van equipped with modern diagnostic appliances and medicines and manned by three itinerant Veterinary Assistant Surgeons.

Prior to independence, the livestock improvement programme was limited to the upgrading of local breeds of cattle through stud bulls and the distribution of improved stocks of poultry. Only 12 bulls were then in service throughout the district. During the First Five Year Plan, improvement of cattle strains was attempted through natural servicing by bulls as also by artificial insemination. The former method not only included the introduction of quality bulls but also the elimination of stray scrub bulls through castration. During the First Plan period, 99 pedigreed Haryana bulls were stationed in 3 zones covering the entire district and having their headquarters at Onda, Peardoba and Khatra. Besides, 63 quality bulls were distributed by Government in other parts of the district and another 20 distributed out of a fund raised through local contributions. Together they were responsible for 3,002 quality calves born in 173 villages. Up to the middle of 1958, 832 scrub bulls were castrated.

Pigs are reared by the Santals and more especially by the Bauris. They are the most prolific of breeders; a team of ten sows and one hog breeds over 150 piglets within a year. The pigs found in the

district are small in size and imported breeds are yet to be tried for improving the quality of the local stock.

During the rains when sparse vegetation grows on Bankura soil, flocks of sheep are brought into the district from up-country to graze. On the outskirts of Bankura town, there is a colony of blanket weavers, consisting of about one hundred families, who have been living there for many decades although their original homeland was outside West Bengal. They also rear sheep which move about in flocks from place to place in search of grazing grounds and return to Bankura when their wool is long enough for clipping.

The goat is the most economical of all milk-producing animals requiring little or no feeding at the household and flourishes where other animals would starve. In Bankura, goats are an important source of income to the backward classes.

According to the Livestock Census of 1956, there were 3,15,612 fowls and 5,33,542 ducks in the district. During the First and Second Plan periods, poultry development work was taken up in certain local zones under Sonamukhi, Onda, Vishnupur and Khatra police stations. The work was limited to the distribution of improved varieties of birds at subsidized rates with provision for a rebate of Rs. 2.50 per bird. In recent years, arrangements have been made to grant loans up to Rs. 400 to villagers through the Block offices. The response from the villagers about poultry farming is, however, not encouraging.

Fisheries

The rivers of the district remain almost dry except during the rainy season yielding a small quantity of fish only during the monsoon months. The number of perennial tanks is also very small as most of the ponds and *bāndhs* dry up, like the rivers, in summer. Because of these adverse natural factors, pisciculture has not made any significant progress in the district so far and it is only during the rains that the tanks are utilized to some extent for rearing of fish. Since the terrestrial conditions do not bid fair for the digging of perennial tanks on a large scale, the prospects of pisciculture in the district are not bright at all.

The types of fish available in the district are— *Ruhi*, *Kātlā*, *Mrigel*, *Ilis* (Hilsa), *Birbol*, *Kālibose*, *Chital*, *Phalui*, *Āir*, *Boāl*, *Ṭangrā*, *Punṭi*, *Chingri*, *Mouralā*, *Chelā*, *Bāṭā*, *Sāl*, *Sol*, *Laṭā* etc. Of these, only the principal varieties of carp, namely *Ruhi*, *Kātlā* and *Mrigel* are available in relatively larger quantities. The main fish markets of the district are located in the municipal towns of Bankura, Vishnupur and Sonamukhi and fish prices range from Rs. 2 to Rs. 6 per kg. according to variety, quality and season.

During the First Five Year Plan, a pisciculture scheme was introduced in the district for improvement of tank fisheries on a Unionwise basis. A second scheme with identical objectives was launched some time later and the two projects covered a total of

1,694 acres (686 hectares) of water area in the district during the First Plan period. During the Second Five Year Plan, short-term loans for augmenting fish production in culturable tanks, medium-term loans for rearing of fish in semi-derelict tanks and loans to fishermen and co-operatives for improving pisciculture were simultaneously introduced. A chain of demonstration fish farms, with tanks in the possession of private owners, was set up and provision was made for granting of bonus to fishermen for intensifying the production of carp fry. A total of about 101 acres (41 hectares) of water area was covered by these schemes. In the beginning of the Third Plan, three more schemes were added to those already operating in the district, namely establishment of fish breeding centres for major Indian carps in *bāndh* type tanks, utilization of Government-owned tanks and setting up of a service party for rendering assistance to pisciculturists. Besides the above assistance, the following amounts were paid as loans and subsidies to deserving families and co-operatives during the three Plan periods for improvement of pisciculture.

	Amount of loan advanced (in Rs.)	Amount granted as subsidies (in Rs.)
First Plan period	1,98,323	1,205
Second Plan period	23,488	5,920
Third Plan period	35,200	10,548

Loans are also advanced to genuine fishermen families for making or purchasing fishing nets. 22 fishermen's co-operative societies were in existence in the district towards the end of 1965. These organizations take lease of rivers, *bāndhs* and tanks from the Land Reforms and Tank Improvement Departments as also from private parties. There is no arrangement at present for fish preservation in the district and icing of a rudimentary type is practised in respect of fish consignments received from outside.

Forestry

The area covered by Bankura forests, their special characteristics and distribution throughout the district, their bearings on local climatic conditions and crop production, the types of vegetation found in them and their exploitation, revenues earned from the sale of forest products, planned afforestation at present as also in the future and the history of forest legislation affecting the district have all been discussed in Chapter I. We need only bring up here certain other points which have not been dealt with so far.

The afforestation policy followed in the district aims at two objectives, namely to increase the quality, especially of hard-wood and match-wood trees of which there is a great dearth in the country, and, secondly, to clothe the bare lands with a vegetative cover to stop soil

erosion and to conserve as much water as possible. Over the last few years some results have been achieved in this behalf as increased water supply and extension of cultivation in the localities adjoining the afforested areas would tend to prove. During the First Plan period, the area brought under afforestation in the district amounted to only 2,915 acres, the corresponding figures for the Second and the Third Plan periods (up to 1964-65), having significantly increased to 4,327 and 7,067 acres respectively.[1]

The chief forest products and the revenues earned from them during the three Plan periods are shown in the statement below:

Period	Forest Produce	Quantity (in cft.)	Value (in Rs.)
First Plan	Timber	7,800	6,665
	Fuel	33,33,200	5,00,876
Second Plan	Timber	78,789	1,21,926
	Fuel	1,09,75,310	52,66,308
Third Plan (up to 1964-65)	Timber	66,491	44,431
	Fuel	2,68,52,247	64,87,412
Total (from 1951-52 to 1964-65)	Timber	1,53,080	1,73,022
	Fuel	4,11,60,757	1,22,54,596

The scientific exploitation of the Bankura forests commenced in the year 1954-55. The felling scheme is based on a rotation of 15 years under a system technically known as 'Coppice with Standard' after making due allowance for blanks and non-merchantable trees. According to this method, the average annual felling area in the district stood at about 9,500 acres over the last 11 years. In order to build up a reserve stock of large-sized timber, steps have been taken to set apart about 5 per cent of the total forest area where no felling except for removal of congestion and elimination of defective trees is allowed.

Forest research in West Bengal is looked after by a special wing under the Forests Department known as the 'Silviculture Division' which has experimental plots near Beliatore (P.S. Barjora) where the problem of soil erosion is studied. Plans are now afoot to extend similar experiments on a water-shed basis in the Ranibandh area.

State aid to agriculture

Normally, agricultural loans, cattle purchase loans and fertilizer loans are advanced to deserving cultivators by the District Officer besides various other loans disbursed by the Agriculture & Community Development Department from their budgetary provisions The amounts so distributed by the Collector of the district from 1962-63 to 1964-65, for which figures are available, are given in the following table.

[1] Source: Divisional Forest Officer, Bankura Division.

Year	Agricultural Loan (in Rs.)	Cattle Purchase Loan (in Rs.)	Fertilizer Loan (in Rs.)
1962-63	7,03,400	1,75,000	1,04,900
1963-64	5,07,600	2,30,000	88,000
1964-65	5,16,420	1,80,000	2,20,400

The farmers also get crop loans through the local co-operative societies. On October 31, 1965, such societies participating in the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme numbered 377 in the district having a total membership of 28,317. On the same date, the total paid-up share capital amounted to Rs. 3,52,413 and the amount advanced as crop loan since the inception of the scheme aggregated to Rs. 9,09,414. The details are given in the following table.[1]

PARTICULARS OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES AND LOANS DISTRIBUTED UNDER THE INTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL AREA PROGRAMME IN BANKURA : 1965
(as on 31.10.65)

Name of Block	No. of Societies	Member-ship	Paid-up share capital (in Rs.)	Crop loan distributed up to 31.10.65 (in Rs.)
Indas	22	2,484	52,188	1,82,900
Patrasayer	28	2,919	44,923	1,25,854
Sonamukhi	29	1,712	27,470	54,775
Kotulpur	29	2,448	47,842	1,64,440
Vishnupur	43	1,116	36,790	10,450
Joypur	14	1,995	44,934	32,720
Barjora	32	1,383	14,848	39,070
Simlapal	16	318	8,128	27,350
Onda	62	10,592	23,720	68,000
Taldangra	20	631	12,769	20,000
Raipur I	46	1,427	21,748	70,440
Raipur II	36	1,292	17,053	1,13,415
Grand total	377	28,317	3,52,413	9,09,414

Floods, famines and droughts

Floods visiting the district since 1823 and the various measures adopted to check them, particularly in recent times, have already been discussed in Chapter I. Writing in 1908, O'Malley had stated in the old Bankura District Gazetteer that "the district is liable to famine

[1] Source: Bankura District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd., Bankura.

owing to its dependence on the rice crop, and to the absence of a complete system of irrigation works to counteract the effects of a failure of the rains. ... Though a certain amount of artificial irrigation is carried on by means of tanks and of embankments thrown across the line of drainage, the greater part of the rice crop is dependent entirely upon the rainfall, and this must be not only sufficient, but also well-distributed. A deficient or badly distributed rainfall is specially disastrous to rice, for the prospects of the early rice are seriously prejudiced by scanty rainfall at the beginning of the monsoon, while its premature termination is injurious to the winter rice crop. ... The *rabi* crops again are grown on a comparatively small area, occupying only 10 per cent of the normal net cropped area, and in a year of short rainfall they are deficient both in yield and area, owing to want of moisture at the time of sowing. The result is that if the rice crop fails completely, distress inevitably ensues."[1]

To the reasons listed by O'Malley must be added the peculiar geographical conditions of the district. The undulating terrain, particularly to the west and the south, and the porous nature of the soil, allow the rain-water to drain off quickly making conditions for rice cultivation difficult in areas other than in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the district. The rivers also do not retain any water except during the monsoon and autumn and this renders artificial irrigation in the riparian lands an impossible proposition for the best part of the year. Although the network of irrigation canals under the command of the Durgapur Barrage and the Kangsabati Project has considerably improved the position in the north-eastern and the southern parts of the district in recent years, the situation in the other parts has not significantly changed from what was described by O'Malley nearly 60 years ago. Bankura, as a whole, is still liable to recurrent scarcities making it necessary for huge amounts to be spent on Government account for famine relief.

Famine of 1866

The most terrible famine which visited Bankura during the latter half of the 19th century was that of 1866 which was caused by a complete failure of the winter crop in 1865. The western and south-western parts of the district bordering Purulia suffered severely but its effects were mild in the north-eastern portion of the district adjoining Burdwan. The area in and around Vishnupur also suffered greatly. To quote O'Malley, "Prices had been high in 1865, and exports had been unusually heavy, for those who ordinarily kept stocks for their consumption through the coming year were tempted by the high rates to sell off what they had. Distress was already noticeable in some parts by the beginning of 1866, and in February there was a violent outbreak of cholera at Bishnupur, which was

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 94.

promoted by, if not directly due to, the extreme scarcity of food. The people were paralyzed by panic, and poverty-striken to such a degree, that they could not even pay the cost of burning their dead, and threw down the corpses outside the town. Prompt measures were taken, however, for the removal of corpses, and the epidemic was checked. . . . Relief works were started in the town, but at the end of April they had to be discontinued for want of funds. . . . Matters were equally bad in the Rāipur thana to the south-west, which was then included in the Mānbhum district. Towards the end of May it was reported that hardly a night passed in which some house about Rāipur was not attacked by large bodies of armed men and grain plundered. The property stolen consisted of nothing but food, and any valuables found in a house were left by the dacoits as useless. . . . Whole villages appeared to be depopulated, and rice was selling at 3½ and 4½ seers per rupee. . . . In September the incoming of the *bhādoi* harvest brought down the price of rice to 12 seers per rupee, and relief operations were suspended early in November, except in Bishnupur, where they were continued till the end of that month. In many places, however, the relief had come too late, and meanwhile the migration, suffering and mortality were very great."[1]

The very widespread distress caused by the famine of 1866 has also been mentioned by William Hunter who, on a visit to Vishnupur, wrote: "I found Bishnupur, once the most populous place in Bengal, a city of paupers. . . . Thirty-five poor wretches were dying daily of hunger, and multitudes of deserted orphans were roaming the streets and subsisting on worms and snails."[2]

Famine of 1874

Another famine visited the district in 1874 but its intensity was much less than that of the famine of 1866. It was caused by a failure of the rice crop over two successive years; the outturn in 1872 having been estimated at only one-half of the average while during the succeeding year it was even less. During 1873, the rainfall was unseasonably distributed affecting both the *āus* and the *āman* crops. Relief measures were promptly organized by March 1874 and in June of that year 11,000 persons were in receipt of charitable relief while 3.650 were employed on relief works. The greatest distress occurred in July when due to the scanty rainfall large masses of field labour failed to find employment and with rising prices private charity ceased to support the destitute. In July 1874, 39,000 persons were receiving charitable relief and 4,100 persons were employed on relief works. Mercifully, the next rice crop was good making it unnecessary for relief operations to continue beyond October of that year. It was estimated that 1,07,828 persons had to be given gratuitous relief and 21,365 persons had to be relieved by wages during this famine.

[1] ibid. pp. 95-97.
[2] F. H. Skrine—Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter. Calcutta, 1901. pp. 114-15.

Scarcity of 1885

Crops failed for two successive years preceding 1885 leading to widespread scarcity in the district which, however, caused much less distress than the preceding famines. Paradoxically, rice was available on the market at rates which could hardly be said to have reached famine rates but the purchasing capacity of the poor was negligible. That part of the populace which needed relief consisted mostly of labourers, beggars and others who, in normal times, subsisted on the charity of their neighbours and their hardship lay in the fact that the failure of local crops restricted the labour market and forced Government to provide employment to those who could not migrate in search of work. The distress was not extensive, the highest daily average of persons receiving charitable relief being only 2,860 at the end of July 1885 and it was found possible to close the relief centres by the end of September of that year.

Famine of 1897

In 1895-96 rainfall was very scanty for winter rice, the main food crop of the district, with the result that the outturn did not exceed 60 per cent of the average. The Vishnupur subdivision containing the best rice lands suffered most inasmuch as the area under winter rice there fell from 1,85,000 acres in 1894-95 to 70,000 acres in 1895-96 and the average outturn was no more than 44 per cent of the normal. The crop in the tract between the Damodar and the Sali—a rich rice-growing zone—failed altogether. In the Bankura subdivision, the *bhādoi* and *rabi* crops suffered enormously. During the following year, rainfall was again very unsatisfactory for the winter rice crop and the outturn for the whole district was estimated to be a little more than 50 per cent of the normal while in some thanas, namely Gangajalghati, Saltora, Mejia, Sonamukhi, Simlapal and Raipur, the production fell to about 25 per cent of the average. The Taldangra and Barjora areas also suffered equally. The best rice producing areas of the district in the Indas, Kotulpur and Vishnupur police stations produced a little more than 60 per cent of the average crop. Abnormal exports to neighbouring districts added to the local scarcity. Unmistakable signs of distress were noticed by May 1897 when gratuitous relief had to be given and relief operations organized in Gangajalghati and Sonamukhi thanas. Relief had also to be distributed in parts of Bankura thana as also in the Taldangra, Indpur, Khatra and Barjora police stations. The distressed area comprised 2,727 sq. km. (1,053 sq. miles) with a population of 4,13,000 persons; the populace receiving relief consisted mainly of landless labourers belonging to the lower castes and tribes. The relief operations were wound up in September 1897, the total number of persons employed on relief works throughout the operations being 3,18,577 while the number of people who received gratuitous relief aggregated to 8,55,204.

Famine of 19

Over a period of 45 years, from 1898 to 1942, occasional scarcities of local magnitude were experienced in the district but no major

famine involving loss of life is on record. This comparative freedom from acute distress led to the comfortable but unfortunate belief that famines had become a thing of the past. The events of 1943 gave a rude shock to this complacence. Historically, the famine of 1943 was building up since the declaration of the Second World War in 1939 which kept the governmental machinery pre-occupied in fighting it. With hostilities spreading to South-East Asia, normal imports of Burma rice ceased completely; the proximity of Bengal to the theatres of war created an atmosphere of uncertainty leading to a phenomenal growth in speculation and black-marketing; the official 'Denial Policy' adopted for military reasons resulted in the denudation of the eastern part of undivided Bengal of its surplus stock of cereals and, at the same time, the demand for food increased considerably on account of the presence of the fighting forces and the countless refugees fleeing from areas which fell to Japan. There was, besides, a partial failure of *āman* crop in 1941 which was not made good by imports. The next *āman* crop with a much better yield helped to wipe out the previous year's deficit but it did not permit any saving or accumulation of stocks. There was another widespread failure in agricultural production in 1943, which, coupled with the visitation of a devastating cyclone in certain parts of lower Bengal, created a food crisis of the first magnitude. In this hour of trial, the people and the administration, both at the Centre as also in Bengal, found themselves unprepared to meet the challenge. The Famine Enquiry Commission which inquired into the causes and effects of this tragedy could not help remarking that "a million and a half of the poor of Bengal fell victims to circumstances for which they themselves were not responsible. Society, together with its organs, failed to protect its weaker members. Indeed there was a moral and social breakdown as well as administrative breakdown."[1]

The food-grain prices began to rise steeply from November 1942 and continued till August 1943 when, for all practical purposes, they soared beyond the reach of the average consumer. In Burdwan, a perennially surplus rice producing district adjoining Bankura, a maund of rice priced in November 1942 at Rs. 7½ shot up in May 1943 to Rs. 29¾. By August 1943, rice in most of the districts was quoted at Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per maund.[2] Viewed against the then national income level, this was far above the purchasing capacity of the common people who began to starve. In the Bankura district, the worst hit police stations were Onda, Gangajalghati, Mejia and Saltora in the Sadar subdivision and Joypur, Sonamukhi and Patrasayer in Vishnupur subdivision. There was an unprecedented evacuation from these places to urban areas, especially to Calcutta.

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[1] Famine Enquiry Commission Report on Bengal. Calcutta, 1945. p. 107.
[2] Evidence of Aziz-ul-Huq, Food Member, Government of India, before the Famine Enquiry Commission. Evidence, Vol II. pp. 426-38,

Although no separate figures are available for the affected areas in Bankura, the all-Bengal death rate rose by 108.3 per cent during the famine. K. P. Chattopadhyay of the Calcutta University, on the basis of a sample survey of mortality conducted by him, put the number of deaths from this famine throughout the entire province at 3.5 millions.[1] The Famine Enquiry Commission (1945), however, estimated it at 1.5 millions.[2]

That the Government was slow to act is proved from the fact that the famine was declared as late as in August 1943 when hundreds were already dying on the streets of Calcutta. The official attempt to control prices also ended in dismal failure as nothing tangible had been done to acquire prior control over supply. The procurement of cereals at Government level from the neighbouring provinces did not materialize except in the case of consignments from Orissa. Official attempts to procure paddy from the interior of Bengal to feed Calcutta only added to the misery in the districts, including Bankura. Relief measures started on a wide scale about the middle of August 1943 and the District Officers were advised that "relief work must take precedence over the ordinary duties of administration." Succour was made available in the form of distribution of gruel or uncooked food, payment in cash or in kind against work done on public projects, grant of agricultural loans to farmers, sale of food-grains at subsidized rates and gratuitous relief. Many philanthropic private organizations also came forward and organized gruel kitchens and mass relief campaigns. By the end of 1943, the Government of India, under the stewardship of the newly appointed Viceroy, Lord Wavell, decided to bring in the army to help the civil authorities in Bengal and several thousand troops, under the command of high-ranking military officers, arrived in Calcutta as also at other points in the province. With better organization and promptitude, they ensured quick movement and distribution of food-grains and ultimately brought the famine under control.

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[1] Evidence before the Famine Enquiry Commission, Nanavati Papers. Evidence, Vol V. pp. 1959-69.

[2] Famine Enquiry Commission Report on Bengal. Calcutta, 1945. p. 110.

CHAPTER V

INDUSTRIES

OLD-TIME INDUSTRIES

Reasons for their decay.

Bankura is an essentially agricultural district. A study of the livelihood pattern of the population, as it was in 1961, reveals that about 77 per cent of the working population depended on agriculture, about 8.7 per cent depended on industry and the remaining 14.3 per cent depended on commerce, transport or other callings. Formerly, the principal industries were silk and cotton weaving with the main manufacturing centres located at Vishnupur and Sonamukhi. Other callings followed by traditional artisans included pottery making, brass and bell-metal work, cutlery manufacture, fabrication of conch-shell articles, leather work, preparation of scented tobacco and production of terracotta plaques for temple decoration. Under the liberal patronage of the Malla kings of Vishnupur, the old-time artisans attained a high degree of excellence in their craftsmanship. For instance, intricate designs woven on traditional looms by hereditary weavers satisfied customers all over the country while scented *amboori* tobacco processed in Vishnupur was considered by connoisseurs as the last word in smoking pleasure. With the decline and fall of the Malla Raj and the withdrawal of their patronage, the decay of old-time industries started. The introduction of cheaper English piece-goods towards the middle of the last century hit the weaving industry hard. The terracotta and tobacco industries suffered an eclipse for want of patrons. Other handicrafts received a setback with the gradual increase in the cost of raw materials. The change in tastes also turned the buyers away from traditional products whose appeal had much to do with old-world associations. The introduction of mechanical and electric power in recent times led to the rise of such new industries as rice and oil milling and other industrial enterprises requiring cheap power. In 1901, the various industries operating in the district used to support 15.9 per cent of the total population while the corresponding figure for 1961 declined to a paltry 8.7 per cent. The present century has, therefore, witnessed a lamentable regression from rural industries to agriculture in the livelihood pattern of the district. As there is no immediate scope for setting up of large-scale industries in Bankura owing to the dearth of raw materials, absence of convenient markets near by and lack of cheap transport etc., the only hope would seem to lie in resuscitating the traditional ones which could yet be viable under the present circumstances.

POWER

There is no hydro-electric or thermal power station in the district. The Damodar Valley Corporation has, of late, emerged as a big power generating agency offering bulk supplies to the State Electricity Board, the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation and direct to the industrial complexes in the Asansol-Durgapur region. In Bankura, electricity is utilized mainly for domestic purposes and to a certain extent by the rice and oil mills. The total quantities of energy purchased and consumed in the district during 1960-61 and 1964-65 are shown in the statement below.[1]

	(In thousand kilowatt-hours)	
	1960-61	1964-65
Energy purchased	3,669	16,995
Energy consumed	2,976	11,488
Industrial consumption	989	3,474
Non-industrial consumption	1,987	8,014

Bankura town was electrified in 1910 but other places in the district were electrified only within the last 15 years. Vishnupur got electricity in 1953 and Sonamukhi and Patrasayer in the early part of 1957. Other areas of the district where electricity has been extended are Beliatore in Barjora police station and Jhāṇṭipāhāri, Kāṇṭāsol and Lakshmīnārāyanpur in Chhatna police station. Beliatore was electrified in 1957, Jhantipahari in 1960 and Kantasol and Lakshminarayanpur in 1959.[2]

MINING & HEAVY INDUSTRIES

Bankura possesses very limited deposits of commercially important minerals. Coal is the principal mineral of the district while china-clay, iron, copper, limestone, mica and wolfram are also found. The approximate location of these minerals and their exploitation potential have been adequately discussed in Chapter I. We may only add in passing that the coal deposits, occurring exclusively within the Mejia police station are so poor that, according to the latest figures available, only 2,257 tons of it were mined in 1958. The Geological Survey of India prospected for coal in Barjora thana in 1957 besides making a one-inch-to-a-mile geological map of the district a few years earlier. A number of private parties prospected for china-clay mica etc. in recent years with indifferent results. Attempts were made by the Government of India to open up the wolfram deposit in Ranibandh police station during the Second World War but the venture was not enthusiastically followed up after the cessation of hostilities.

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[1] Source: State Electricity Board, West Bengal.
[2] Source : ditto.

The poor development of the mining industries in Bankura is matched by the complete non-existence of heavy industries of any kind in the district.

LARGE-SCALE & SMALL-SCALE INDUSTRIES

Large-scale industries like jute or textile mills, sugar factories etc. are conspicuous by their absence. Small-scale industries, already briefly enumerated, have been in existence in the district since the heyday of the Malla power. The more important of them are taken up below for detailed examination.

Silk weaving industry

Silk weaving is the most important among the old-time industries of the district. In the 18th and the early part of the 19th century, Bankura played an important role in the commerce of the East India Company owing to the high appreciation of Bankura silks in foreign markets. There was a principal silk factory at Sonamukhi with 31 subordinate *āurangs* under it among which those at Surul and Ilāmbāzār in Birbhum district and Patrasayer in Bankura district were more well-known. All these commercial establishments were under the control of John Cheap, the Resident of the main factory at Sonamukhi. With the decay in the East India Company's trade, the industry fell on evil days. Its resuscitation is an event of recent times.

Silk weaving is now a prosperous industry in Bankura. Only a portion of the raw materials is produced locally, the balance being imported from outside. Silk worms are reared and silk is spun in many villages in the district. According to the 1951 Census there were about 180 acres of land in the district under mulberry cultivation but in the lateritic soil of Bankura the yield of mulberry leaves does not exceed 6,000 lbs. per acre. There is hardly any arrangement for irrigating the mulberry fields except through pumps provided by the State Government. Farmers usually manure their fields with cow-dung, mustard cakes and green manure. This aspect lends the industry a predominantly agricultural character.

Sericulture nursery at Vishnupur

There is a small sericulture nursery at Vishnupur where disease-free mulberry cocoons are reared and supplied free of cost to rearers all over West Bengal. The demonstrators attached to this unit visit rearers and educate them on the process of scientific rearing. Study on improved methods of mulberry cultivation is also carried on here.

Processing of silk

The processing of silk yarn has undergone a change in recent times. It starts with the winding of the yarn (better known as 're-hanking') on different *lāṭāis* (bamboo-made spindles) according to varying 'deniers', a term which denotes the degree of fineness of silk yarn. The hanks are then subjected to boiling in a caustic soda solution for about an hour for de-gumming (bleaching) and are thereafter washed, dried and re-winded. Rice-starch is then applied with a brush to the warp, stretched lengthwise with proper denting between wooden stands, and when the size dries up, the warp is wound round a wooden

beam which is then fixed to the loom and the warp adjusted suitably for weaving. Previously, indigenous ingredients like *haritaki* (a kind of fruit), indigo, tamarind, alum, ferrous sulphate, sodium carbonate etc. were used for dyeing silk yarn. The modern practice is to use chemical dyes.

Manufacturing centres

The industry is located at Vishnupur, Bankura, Rājagrām, Birsinghapur, Joypur, Gopināthpur and Sonamukhi, the chief centres being Vishnupur and Sonamukhi. Vishnupur enjoys a special reputation for the manufacture of prettily embroidered silk scarves, plain and flowered saris and a maroon coloured cloth called *dhupchhāyā*. Writing in 1908, O'Malley had stated that "though the fabrics are not equal to the Berhampore silk in fineness and evenness of texture, they are in considerable demand in the district, and also outside it." But we find from the Census Handbook on Bankura published in 1953 that "in the beginning of this century Vishnupur fabrics were considered inferior to those of Berhampur silk in fineness and evenness of texture. But latterly Vishnupur silk is supposed to have surpassed the woven cloth of Murshidabad." This proves that the Bankura artisans have improved their skill to a great extent since the publication of O'Malley's Gazetteer in 1908. Vishnupur also works in artificial silk imported from abroad while Sonamukhi specializes in the manufacture of stout silks fit for suitings, shirtings etc. In recent times Sonamukhi has been producing stout weaves of excellent quality capable of holding their own even in foreign markets.

The present position

At present the main items of production are silk saris of ornamental design, dhotis, *chāddars*, *tassar* shirtings, *maṭkā* and various other fabrics. Supply of silk yarn of high quality is obtained from Malda while coarser yarn is obtained from the district itself. Silk looms are mostly of the throw-shuttle type which are considered more suitable for weaving delicate yarns.[1] Many weavers of Bankura use jacquard looms for weaving high quality ornamental silk fabrics. Finished silk goods are sold all over India as also abroad through normal trade channels, co-operative societies and Government agencies. The Bānkurā Resham Silpa Samabāya Sangha, a co-operative society of the silk artisans organized by the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal, plays an important role in the development of silk industry in the district.

According to a survey undertaken in 1960-62, on a complete enumeration basis, by the statistical cell attached to the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal, there were altogether 790 units (a unit being

[1] "The looms used are of the throw-shuttle type and no fly-shuttle aleys are used for the weaving of silk-fabrics as the weavers believe that fly-shuttle looms are unsuited to them since the texture being fine, the silk does not stand the additional strain of fly-shuttle weaving. Some of the weavers are now using jacquard machines to weave cloth with ornamental borders."—Report on the Survey of Cottage Industries in Bengal (Second Edition). Calcutta, 1929. p. 20.

defined as an undertaking where any kind of manufacturing, repairing, assembling, servicing of ancillary manufacturing gear or processing of silk was carried out) working in the district of which 112 were concerned with rearing of silk cocoons giving employment to 231 persons; 23 were engaged in reeling of silk providing employment to 24 persons and 655 were working in connexion with silk weaving providing employment to 2,407 persons.

Government have encouraged in recent years the formation of co-operatives connected with the production of art silk and the total number of such organizations in the district in 1963 was 8 with a membership aggregating to 338. These were located at Indpur, Bankura, Vishnupur, Joypur, Sonamukhi and Patrasayer. The manufacture of mixed fabrics fashioned from natural and artificial silk is usually done by the silk weavers of Vishnupur. Sonamukhi, as has been stated already, specializes in shirtings and suitings of various pleasing designs while Vishnupur specializes in jacquard or plain bordered saris and mixed fabrics.

With the recent resuscitation of the silk industry of Bankura, the demand for silk yarn has increased considerably and the erstwhile implements are being largely replaced by improved ones. It has been suggested that "an adequate supply of seeds and introduction of improved reeling machines are necessary for the industry to be put on a footing of equality with the Mysore and Japanese silk industries."[1]

Rayon industry of Vishnupur

When, in the past, the silk industry of Bankura was on a phase of decline, many of the silk weavers of Vishnupur turned to rayon weaving as they found that rayon goods could be produced more cheaply and quickly. With an increasing demand for rayon products in the country, the artisans found the new calling remunerative although they had to import the yarns mainly from Japan or Italy. In 1965, a large number of families was employed in rayon weaving in Vishnupur producing, mainly, dhotis, saris, *chāddars* and shirtings which had a good market in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Some of the producers have, in recent years, opened their own shops at Vishnupur from which middlemen collect the finished goods and despatch them to the selling centres.

Tassar weaving

In a report entitled 'The State of the Tusser Silk Industry in Bengal and the Central Provinces' published in 1905, N. G. Mukherji had stated that "tusser weaving industry of Bankura seems to be more famous than of any other place I have yet visited. The saris and dhotis of Sonamukhi and Bishnupur are very famous; even in Dacca and Mymensingh they are prized." He also reported that there were at that time 1,000 families of *tassar* weavers at Sonamukhi, 500 to 700 families at Vishnupur, 400 families at Gopināthpur and Bankura town, 200 families at Rājagrām and about 400 families at Rājhāt-

[1] Techno-Economic Survey of West Bengal : published by the National Council of Applied Economic Research. New Delhi, 1962. p. 125.

Birsinghapur representing "at least 10,000 individuals working or capable of working in tusser. When they cannot get enough cocoons, they take to cotton weaving, but they prefer turning out tusser. The tusser weaving industry of Bishnupur seems to be very extensive. The tusser weavers there weave either silk or tusser, more silk now than tusser. Silk weaving is improving while tusser weaving is going down. The weavers say it costs them now almost as much turning out a tusser sari as a silk sari, and people prefer a silk sari."

The quantity of *tassar* cocoons reared in the district has always been insufficient to meet the local demand which has had to be supplemented by imports from Midnapur and Chotanagpur. N. G. Mukherji had noticed a decline in this industry as early as in 1905; it has since declined further. In 1951, the total number of *tassar* establishments in the district was only 65 employing 231 persons. There is, however, a good scope for development of this industry. Recently, steps have been taken by the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal, to open a centre at Taldangra for supplying better types of seeds for the production of improved varieties of *tassar* cocoons.

Cotton weaving industry

Cotton weaving has always been an important industry in Bankura. According to the Census of 1871, there were 6,685 cotton weavers in the district. During the second half of the 19th century, however, this cottage craft suffered a reverse due to large imports of cheaper machine-made cloth from abroad. This phase of decline appears to have continued well into the present century as we find from a report on the development of cottage industries in Bengal, published in 1921, that the number of persons in the district engaged in cotton spinning and weaving had dwindled to 4,800. In 1940, the corner was possibly turned according to an official report published in that year which put the number of weavers in Bankura at 7,037. The Second World War created a very good demand for handloom products owing to contemporary scarcity of mill-made cloths on the Indian market. This was reflected in the progress made by the industry in subsequent years. According to the Census of 1951, there were 8,238 cotton weaving establishments in the district engaging 21,643 persons. Towards the end of 1951, following a sharp fall in the demand for handloom products, the All India Handloom Board took active steps to reorganize the industry on proper lines. The latest official estimate, valid for March 1964, states that the co-operative societies had with them 5,266 registered looms while private weavers operated 6,839 looms in the district. Working on the figures accepted by the All India Handloom Board that each textile handloom employs on an average 2.5 persons, it is estimated that these 12,105 looms in the district provided employment to a little more than 30,000 weavers.

With a view to placing the industry on the road to progress, the All India Handloom Board laid great stress on the formation of handloom weavers' co-operative societies and we find that in 1963 there

were 96 such societies in the district with a total membership of 5,847. At that time about 55 per cent of the total number of active workers engaged in the industry had come within the co-operative fold. There were then 15 handloom co-operatives in Bankura town and 14 in Onda thana besides 7 co-operatives in each of the police stations of Taldangra, Simlapal, Raipur, Gangajalghati and Barjora. One or more co-operatives were also formed in Chhatna, Mejia, Saltora, Khatra, Indpur, Ranibandh, Vishnupur, Joypur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas police stations.

The main centres of cotton weaving in the district are located at Bankura town, Rājagrām, Kenjākurā, Pānchmurā, Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, Rājhāṭ-Birsinghapur, Madanmohanpur and Patrasayer. The products usually consist of dhotis, saris, bed-sheets, napkins etc.

Wool weaving industry

Blankets are woven by small colonies of *Bheḍiāls* (shepherds) at Lokpur and Kendudi on the outskirts of Bankura town. It is reported that these shepherds were originally immigrants from the district of Gaya in Bihar, but they have now severed all connexions with their native place and have made Bankura their permanent home. They keep their own flocks and the blankets they produce are of very coarse quality having only a local demand.

Lac industry

The manufacture of lac is another old-time industry of the district which was carried on extensively during the latter half of the 19th century. E. W. Collin in his Report on the Existing Crafts and Industries in Bengal, published in 1890, had stated that "the chief seat of the industry is Bankura, while at Sonamukhi there are 75 factories employing over five thousand persons for a part of the year." The industry, however, suffered a severe reverse owing to the competition of cheap foreign lac. According to O'Malley, "the number of factories decreased from 35 in 1901 to 24 in 1905 but rose again to 26 in 1906, when the outturn was 4,160 maunds."[1] It will thus be seen that within a period of about 16 years, i.e. between 1890 and 1906, the number of factories at Sonamukhi had dwindled from 75 to 26. The industry has continued to decline since then and we find from the Report on the Survey of Cottage Industries in Bengal that in 1921 there were only a very few factories at Khatra and 8 small factories at Sonamukhi, each employing about a dozen persons. The financial condition of the lac manufacturers was reported to be precarious owing to the constant fluctuations in the shellac market.

The following passage taken from O'Malley's Bankura District Gazetteer (1908) will give an idea of the processing of raw lac as it was done in those days: "The raw lac is a resinous incrustation, which is produced round the bodies of colonies of the lac insect, after it has fastened on the twigs of certain trees, such as the *palās* (*Butea frondosa*), *kusum* (*Schleichera trijuga*), *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) and *āsan*

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 113.

(*Terminalia tomentosa*). This insect lives on vegetable sap, which it sucks up by means of a proboscis from the succulent tissues of these trees. When the larvae escape from the dead bodies of the females, they crawl about in search of fresh sappy twigs; and at the time of swarming the twigs of the trees infested by them will often be seen to assume a reddish colour, owing to the countless masses of minute larvae moving all over them. Those that survive penetrate the twigs and become permanently fixed there, till they emerge as insects, proceeding in the process of digestion to transform the sap sucked up by their proboscis, and to exude from their bodies a resinous incrustation, with which they ultimately become incrusted. The twigs continue to be incrusted until the crop is collected in May to June and October to November, or just before the swarming seasons. The incrusted twigs are collected and sold to dealers under the name of 'stick-lac'. These are dried, broken up and crushed, and the lac is pounded and washed under water. The washings, when boiled down and concentrated, become 'lac-dye', and the washed lac is known as 'seed-lac'. The lac is now placed in long shallow cloth bags, and these are twisted in front of fires till the lac melts and is squeezed through the texture of the bags. When sufficiently cooked, it is spread out on hot tubes until it assumes the form of large thin sheets. These are next taken up by skilled operators, who stand in front of the fires, and stretch the sheets till they become as thin as paper, forming the 'shellac' of commerce."[1]

In recent times, attempts are being made to re-vitalize this industry and a scheme has been drawn up by the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal, to train tribal people in the production of seed-lac through modern scientific methods. A training centre was opened at Khatra in 1955-56 to produce varnish and sealing wax. Financial assistance is offered to the trainees passing out from this centre to organize co-operative societies amongst themselves.

Conch-shell industry

The principal centres of the conch-shell industry are located at Vishnupur and Bankura town. At the time of Hornell's enquiry in 1914,[2] the industry was practised on a very extensive scale in the district. At present there are relatively smaller artisans' communities at Vishnupur, Bankura and Patrasayer engaged in the manufacture of conch-shell ornaments like bangles, rings, bead-necklaces etc. Occasionally, expert craftsmen turn out whole conch-shell pieces exquisitely embellished with embossed decorations but such products do not find a market now and are, therefore, rarely produced. Rings, buttons and small floral designs are turned out of the parts that are left after the bangles have been sliced out. The polishing of the bangles and similar other minor works are done by the women and children in the artisan's family. The ornamentation is always done

[1] Ibid, pp. 113-14.
[2] James Hornell—The Sacred Chank of India. 1914.

by the expert craftsmen with simple tools. Hitherto shell cutting centres have not employed the machine-saw; the one that is traditionally used is a heavy instrument which cuts the shell as it moves either way. The methods of work followed in the district are similar to those used for centuries at Dacca, but the finishing is not so good.

Production and prices at most of the centres have, of late, declined considerably. To the factory owners or independent workers, the margin of profit has become very small, while the incomes of the wage-earning workers have been reduced with the result that the industry is becoming less and less remunerative. With a hired hand, a family of two working members can turn out 16 bangles a day, earnings from which can hardly sustain all of them.

In a sample survey undertaken in 1962-63 by the State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal which covered 264 establishments in the district engaged in this handicraft, the following features were noticed. There are two types of establishments: (*a*) independent units which mostly purchase raw materials and sell finished goods, and (*b*) auxiliary or *dādandāri* units which receive raw materials from brokers and supply finished products to them against what may be called wages. Of the 264 units surveyed, 119 conformed to the first type while 145 units came under the second category. Finished and semi-finished bangles constitute the bulk of the manufacture; shell-trinkets and other miscellaneous products occupy relatively unimportant position in the list of manufactured articles.

While the craftsmen of Bongāon (24-Parganas), perhaps because of their superior skill, are mostly engaged in shaping and polishing semi-finished bangles and consume little of raw conch-shell, the craftsmen of Bankura do more of primary processing and, therefore, require more shells. The cost of raw materials, not unnaturally, accounts for as much as 84 per cent of the total expenditure of the independent units. All the independent units and the majority of auxiliary units own the tools they require and incur no expenditure on this account.

Because of their comparatively heavy outturn, a Bankura artisan in an independent unit, in spite of somewhat high cost of production, earned Rs. 1,068 per year on an average. The approximate income margin of a worker in an auxiliary unit was about Rs. 50 per month. About 4 per cent of independent artisans in the Sadar subdivision of Bankura sell their wares from their own premises and quite a number of them have direct contacts with markets in Calcutta, Bihar and Orissa. A major portion of the total credit comes from private sources, the rates of interest varying widely, the average rate being about 9.35 per cent per annum. The average interest charged by the State for credit facilities extended to the artisans is about 3.98 per cent per annum.

In spite of West Bengal Government's efforts to procure the raw

material in sufficient quantities, South Indian merchants from Rāmnād, Ṭuṭicorin and other places exercise a very effective and firm control over the supply of conch-shells to this part of the country. As a result, the Bankura artisans often have to pay unusually high prices and even then they cannot always secure adequate supplies.

Shell bangles, once so popular in Bengal, particularly among married women, for their finish and design, now face serious competition from cheaper and more durable plastic wares, and in spite of their sentimental value to orthodox Hindus, shell bangles are being gradually pushed out. According to expert opinion, resuscitation of this exquisite cottage industry could be brought about through the provision of better capital, arrangements for regular supply of quality shells at reasonable prices as also in the improvement and change in the designs.

Brass and bell-metal industry

Brass and bell-metal utensils and various other articles are manufactured on a large scale at Bankura, Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer, Kenjākurā, Ajodhyā, Lakshmisāgar, Madanmohanpur and Māyānagar. A special alloy, called *bharan*, is used only by the artisans of Vishnupur.

The articles manufactured in Bankura town consist mainly of water vessels with long spouts (locally known as *gāḍus*), rice-bowls made of wood but bound with brass as also other usual utensils. Vishnupur specializes in producing plates, bowls, tumblers etc. The plates are of various kinds, namely *chhak kaṭki*, *nath kaṭki* (which show intricate floral decorations on the raised edges as also at the centres), *monoharā*, *kānseswari* etc. The measuring bowls of Vishnupur also have various names according to their cubic contents. These may be *sholo-charti*, *āṭ-charti* or *pānch-charti* according to their respective capacities for measuring 16, 8 or 5 units. The *moṭā-poā* and *khās-poā* bowls can measure up to a quarter of a seer. The *dari-bāṭi* (having a tapering end and an expanded bottom), the *chikan* and the *talājuri* are other kinds of bowls. There are at least two types of bowls manufactured at Vishnupur which are associated with place-names, namely *Lakshmisāgar-bāṭi* and *Kāliganjer-bāṭi*. The former might have originated at Lakshmisāgar, another centre of brass and bell-metal industry in the district, and the latter is supposed to have been designed by a craftsman from Kāliganj. Another type of bowl, bearing the name *padma-bāṭi*, finds a ready market in Orissa. The articles usually turned out at Patrasayer are cups and *loṭās*, mostly of brass. They are cast in moulds and the methods of turning and finishing are similar to those employed at Vishnupur. The other centres produce the usual utensils prized in Bengali households and the manufacturing processes are also more or less the same.

Brass or *pital* is a mixture of copper and zinc; bell-metal or *kānsā* is obtained by fusing copper with tin and *bharan* is prepared by mixing copper, zinc and tin. The art of mixing the ingredients has come

down to the artisans as a hereditary skill which they try to keep as a trade secret. Of these three alloys, *kānsā* is the most popular, *pital* and *bharan* following it in that order. A quantity of German-silver goods is also produced at Vishnupur.

Although there are many other centres in West Bengal where brass and bell-metal articles are produced, utensils made of *bharan* are known to be manufactured only at Vishnupur. The articles usually produced with this alloy are dishes, bowls and tumblers. In very recent times certain artisans of Patrasayer have taken to this craft. Many of the *bharan* products are gracefully decorated.

At present there are 15 brass and bell-metal establishments in Vishnupur, all owned by the members of 4 families who use the titles 'Dās,' 'Kāiti', 'Kuchlyān' and 'Chakravarti' as their surnames. The Das, Kuchlyan and Kaiti families come from the Karmakār caste, a section of the *Nabasākha* group, from whose hands a Brahmin may take water. The Chakravartis are Brahmins but they took to this profession long ago. The owners of these workshops usually employ paid artisans, mainly from the Karmakār caste.

Previously, the industry was entirely in the hands of local *mahājans* who used to purchase raw materials from Calcutta, supply them to the artisans, collect finished goods from them and send them to various marketing centres in or outside the district. The Directorate of Industries, West Bengal has since set up an organization in Bankura town for supplying raw materials to the brass and bell-metal artisans of the district in order to free them from the clutches of the *mahājans*. A rolling and polishing plant has also been set up at the district headquarters which caters to the needs of the craftsmen by selling bell-metal sheets to them and polishing their finished products.

Of the co-operative societies formed by the brass and bell-metal artisans of the district, the Vishnupur Co-operative Braziers' Society is the oldest. It was formed in 1944 with a membership of 282 workers. "The main function of the society in the beginning was to obtain coal for its workers. But later it started purchasing scrap and selling bell-metal articles on behalf of its members. It received a loan of Rs. 9,000 from the Co-operative Bank to finance its activities. The annual production of the members is 1,100 maunds, valued at Rs. 2,00,000 approximately. The society has succeeded in stabilizing the earnings of the workers. But though the majority of the metal workers of Vishnupur belong to the society, many of them are forced to borrow from the *mahājans* during the slack season and the *mahājans* force them to leave the society and work for them."[1] In 1960 the membership of this society had dwindled to 256 and local enquiries made in 1965 revealed that it was then in a moribund condition. Several other similar co-operative societies were functioning in the

[1] Report on the Marketing of Handicrafts: published by the Indian Co-operative Union. New Delhi, 1955. Chapter IV, Sec. 236.

district in 1960 at Bankura town, Lakshmisagar, Patrasayer and other places with a total membership of 251.

Pottery industry

In a recent survey[1] undertaken by the State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal, in which 211 pottery establishments in the Sadar subdivision of the Bankura district were covered, it was found that inexpensive ingredients like common earth and sand were the principal raw materials used in this industry. These raw materials were either gathered free or collected from rented lands or procured from other sources at varying prices. Transport and labour charges were the two principal factors determining the cost of supply of these items. In Bankura, it was found that 94.05 per cent of earth was gathered free, 1.03 per cent was collected from rented lands while 4.92 per cent was procured from other sources. Nearly all the sand was obtained by the artisans free of cost.

The products consist mainly of various types of pots and pitchers, tumblers, plates and the like, which are turned out on the potter's wheel and then sun-dried and burnt in kilns. Slips are used on the finished products some of which are also decorated with simple designs. The brittleness of the manufactured articles does not permit their export to distant places and these are mostly sold in the vicinity of the potters' villages.

It was found in Bankura that hired labour was employed in the potters' establishments on monthly wages ranging between Rs. 18 and Rs. 25 per month. In many cases in Bankura the wages were paid in kind. The wage-cost per rupee value of production was found to be of the order of Re. 0.18 which was very low indeed. The survey also revealed that the craft was carried on mostly by the members of the potter's family without having to depend on hired labour.

The future of this industry does not appear, on the whole, to be bright. Competition from utensils made of cheap materials like aluminium etc. is difficult to overcome as these durable substitutes have now penetrated into the remotest rural areas. Insufficiency of capital, non-availability of fuels at reasonable prices and lack of marketing facilities are also formidable obstacles. The report of the aforesaid survey concluded by saying that "the real solution for the industry would lie in a partial switch over from the products made at present to the manufacture of glazed wares."

In Bankura, two communities of potters, resident at Pānchmurā (P. S. Taldangra) and Sonamukhi, are engaged in the hereditary craft of producing terracotta horses, elephants, tigers etc. as also cult objects associated with the worship of the serpent deity Manasā. Their craft has been adequately described under entries 'Panchmura' and 'Sonamukhi' in Chapter XVI on Places of Interest.

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[1] Report on the Pottery Industry—A Type-Study: State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal. Calcutta, 1963.

Lantern industry

A special variety of cheap lanterns is produced at Vishnupur of which the prototype was fabricated some 80 years ago by one Rai Charan Garai, a member of the Kolu community residing at Vishnupur. Because of their dependability, extreme cheapness and low kerosine consumption these lanterns are very popular among the poorer sections of the people.

The industry is mainly in the hands of the members of the Kolu caste who reside in the Āisbāzār, Raghunāthsāyer, Gopālganj, Hāzrāpārā, Bāhādurganj, Garhdarjā and Station Road localities of Vishnupur town. Of the 55 workshops now in operation, they own some 50, the rest being run by members of the Sutradhar and Karmakār castes. As is common in all cottage industries, the members of the owners' families help in the processes making it largely unnecessary to employ hired labour unless the establishment is big. The largest of the Vishnupur lantern factories employs 20 paid workers and produces, on an average, 144 lanterns a day.

Hitherto, the industry was virtually a monopoly of Vishnupur but of late workshops have come up at Rāmpurhāṭ (Birbhum district) and Kāṭwā (Burdwan district) but these do not pose any problem for the industry at Vishnupur. A lantern of this type has, at its bottom, a shallow square-shaped oil container standing on four legs. The middle portion shielding the wick within has four plate glasses fixed on vertical frames. There is a dome-shaped metal cover at the top carrying a perforated circular member capped by a bent wire holder.

Raw materials used in the industry are galvanized sheets, plate glass, wire and tin foils. In 1965 the cost of production varied between 0.75 paise and Re. 1 and the selling prices were from Re. 1 to Rs. 1.50 per piece. The wholesale prices were from Rs. 11 to Rs. 16 per dozen. These lanterns find a wide market all over Bankura, in the neighbouring districts of Midnapur, Burdwan, Birbhum and Purulia and are also exported to places as far away as Bilāspur in Madhya Pradesh and Mathurā in Uttar Pradesh. The condition of the industry is, on the whole, satisfactory owing to the heavy offtake of its products.

Leather works

According to the Census of 1961, there were 85 establishments in the district manufacturing leather and leather products of which 72 were located in the rural areas. Cobblers of Bankura produce, among other articles, high quality boots and shoes of various designs which find a ready market because of their cheapness. In 1960, there were 4 co-operative societies of leather workers in the district of which mention may be made of Kotulpur Thana Leather Workers' Industrial Co-operative Society with a membership of 70. The State Government advances loans to deserving leather artisans through the Block Development offices to help develop this industry.

Handicrafts co-operatives

In 1960, there were 35 handicrafts co-operative societies in the district of which 17 were working and 18 non-working. Of these, as

many as 20 were registered prior to 1.4.51 while 5 came into existence during the First Plan period and the remaining 10 started functioning during the Second Plan. The 17 working co-operatives covered 9 trades including brass and bell-metal, conch-shell, pottery, handloom, leather-craft, wool-weaving, fibre, cane and bamboo industries. The brass and bell-metal industry had five co-operative societies and the conch-shell industry had four, while two co-operative societies were functioning in the pottery industry and the remaining six looked after the handloom, leather-works, wool weaving, fibre and cane and bamboo industries. According to the latest figures, these 17 co-operative societies had a total membership of 1,060 which included 12 women.

Re-organization of rural industries

Systematic re-organization of rural industries was taken up by the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal and the Khādi & Village Industries Board ever since the First Five Year Plan. The work envisaged the resuscitation of the existing industries as well as the development of new ones. To achieve these dual objectives, the Directorate of Industries proposes to take the following actions: (*i*) to foster the development of existing and new cottage industries by all practical means with a view to creating new employment and improving the economic standard of the masses ; (*ii*) to take suitable measures for decentralization of cottage industries in different regions in order to assist regional economic development ; (*iii*) to initiate measures for improving the production techniques of the artisans by the introduction of improved methods of production and improved appliances ; (*iv*) to arrange financial assistance for cottage industries where necessary and to arrange facilities for marketing and publicity of cottage industry products and (*v*) to arrange supply of raw materials where feasible and to undertake periodical surveys of cottage industries so as to elicit latest knowledge with regard to their position and requirement from stage to stage.

While the First Plan highlighted the role of cottage and small-scale industries in our national economy, field surveys were taken up only during the Second Plan period to assess their actual position and potentialities. During the Third Plan, many of the cottage and small-scale industries dispersed over the rural areas of Bankura district were re-organized with financial assistance provided under the Bengal State Aid to Industries Act, 1931, as amended from time to time. Though no spectacular success has been achieved so far, it may be said that the local artisans living within the Development Block areas now find a wider scope for working in an organized manner. During the Third Plan, several schemes were in operation for imparting training to the sons of artisans through the Production-cum-Training Centres so that they could take to the various industries in the rural areas of the district. The Directorate of Industries also provided financial assistance to different technical institutions. For instance,

the industrial schools at Vishnupur which had been imparting training in carpentry and weaving received maintenance and lump grants of Rs. 2,700 and Rs. 13,500 respectively during 1959-60. State assistance to the weavers' co-operatives also came in the shape of improved designs and assistance in marketing the products. Improved appliances and semi-automatic looms were supplied to a number of weavers' co-operative societies to strengthen the existing handloom industry of the district. A scheme for the development of wood and stone carving started functioning at Susuniā during the Second Five Year Plan and the object was to impart training in improved methods of production and to provide the artisans with finance. The locale of the scheme has since been shifted to Midnapur. Several other schemes for the development of the bell-metal craft, blacksmithy, carpentry and tannery were also introduced in the district from time to time during the various Plan periods.

Development of rural Industries by the Khādi & Village Industries Board

Several schemes are now being implemented in the district under the supervision of the West Bengal Khādi & Village Industries Board. Besides sanctioning loans and grants to carpentry, blacksmithy, pottery, non-edible oil and soap industries, the Board is also rendering assistance for improvement in cane *gur* and *khāndsāri* production. In 1962-63 a sum of Rs. 1,067 was advanced as loan while Rs. 133 was given as grant. In 1963-64, Rs. 2,000 was sanctioned as loan. The industries patronized by the Board are located at Khālgrām and Gāndhigrām, two small villages in Ṭaldangra police station of the district. In 1965-66, the Board allotted a fully mechanized *gur* production unit to the Gāndhi Khādi Grāmodyog Kendra at Vishnupur. The Brindābanpur Samabāya Krishi Unnayan Samiti was similarly given a bullock-driven crusher and other accessories for development of the cane *gur* industry. A sum of Rs. 24,785 was advanced as loan and Rs. 4,034 was given as grant for these purposes in 1965-66. Under another scheme sponsored by the Board for the development of fibre industry in the district, two centres, already in operation at Vishnupur and Nabajibanpur, were paid Rs. 13,800 as grants during 1965-66. While ex-leprosy patients are employed at Nabajibanpur, the workers at Vishnupur were mostly women. The Board spent Rs. 8,250 as loans and Rs. 5,970 as grants during 1961-62 to assist a number of leather industries in the district.

The Board employs a Circle Inspector and a small team of technical personnel who are responsible for supervising all schemes sponsored by it in the district and rendering technical help wherever necessary.

State aid to industries

The Bengal State Aid to Industries Act, 1931 (as amended from time to time) provides for loans to deserving industries against securities prescribed under the Act. In the original Act, the provisions regarding the furnishing of securities and the procedure for the repayment of the loans were fairly stringent. The poor artisans were generally not in a position to offer the prescribed securities or produce

sureties of sufficient means to stand as guarantors for timely repayment of the loans. This lacuna was duly considered by the Government and the terms and conditions of the loans have since been liberalized. At present, the Block Development Officers are authorized under the said Act to sanction loans up to Rs. 400 in each individual case on a personal bond without asking for security or a surety. The District Magistrates may similarly grant loans up to Rs. 5,000 with two sureties who need not hypothecate any property. For amounts exceeding Rs. 5,000, proper securities have to be furnished by either the loanee or the sureties and such secured loan, up to Rs. 10,000 can be granted by the District Magistrates and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, the latter being entitled to advance amounts only to industrial co-operatives. The Director of Industries, West Bengal is authorized to sanction secured loans up to Rs. 15,000. The Secretary, Cottage and Small Scale Industries Department is similarly empowered to grant secured loans up to Rs. 50,000 and the Government of West Bengal may sanction amounts up to Rs. 1 lakh.

Between 1957-58 and 1964-65, a total sum of Rs. 3,43,845 was disbursed as industrial loans under the State Aid to Industries Act to numerous craftsmen or other industrial workers in the district. Of this amount, Rs. 1,49,052 was advanced during 1964-65 alone to 601 artisans residing in 21 Development Blocks or municipal areas within the district. Up to March 31, 1965, the amount due for realization against these loans from all over the district was Rs. 1,02,282. In other words, an amount of Rs. 1,02,282 remained unrealized up to the end of the financial year 1964-65 against a total advance of Rs. 3,43,845 made earlier, which works out to about 30 per cent of the loans remaining unrealized by March 31, 1965.

The overall picture of loan realization in the district need not be considered as extraordinarily gloomy inasmuch as the above figures do not compare unfavourably with analogous statistics relating to many other West Bengal districts. On the contrary, Bankura being a perennially poverty-stricken district, it would be more reasonable to conclude that the artisans concerned tried their best to establish themselves in various industries and, in the process, repaid as much of the loans as possible.

BIG INDUSTRIES

Mining and heavy industries

There is no heavy industry in the district falling in the categories of machine tools or automobile manufacture etc. The mining industry, already briefly described in Chapter I, is also of a very limited extent. The principal mineral raised is coal although little quantities of wolfram are reported to have been mined for some time by a private firm near Chhendāpāthār in Ranibandh police station. The other minerals available in the district have already been dealt with in Chapter I but none of them, except coal, is exploited on a commercial

scale. As regards coal mines, there were seven of them (according to a report received in 1961) in the northern parts of the district (mainly in Mejia police station), where, besides those that are worked, several other coal seams are believed to exist which may be continuations of the more well-known deposits in the Raniganj region just on the other side of the Damodar river. The inconsequential nature of the coal industry in Bankura will be apparent from the fact that all the seven coal mines were very small.

Large-scale industries

Large-scale industries like textile mills, jute mills, sugar factories etc. are also conspicuous by their absence. The nearest approach to undertakings of this kind is perhaps provided by a small engineering firm doing general job work and another producing spun pipes. According to information received in April 1966 from the Chief Inspector of Factories, West Bengal, there were altogether 76 establishments in the district registered under the West Bengal Factories Act of which 49 were rice mills, 8 oil mills (producing edible oils other than hydrogenated oils), 7 *biḍi* factories, one knitting mill, one saw mill, one lac factory, one general engineering firm and a spun pipe factory. There were, besides, 2 undertakings connected with the production of ferrous materials and an establishment turning out metal containers and steel trunks. The three engineering training institutes in the district and a repair shop were also included in the official list of factories. While the rice mills accounted for the employment of 1,617 persons on an average per day, the number of workers in the *biḍi* factories was estimated at 944. The remaining undertakings employed in all about 790 workers daily.

Small-scale industries

From the statistics used in the preceding paragraph, it will be apparent at once that out of the 76 registered factories in the district, as many as 65 (49 rice mills, 8 oil mills, 7 *biḍi* factories and one saw mill) were connected with the processing of agricultural produce. This clearly highlights the heavy agricultural bias of the existing industries of Bankura. Such agro-based industries—chiefly rice, pulses and oil mills as also tea factories—are to be found in most other districts of West Bengal but there is a difference in the case of Bankura. Whereas agro-based industries constitute only 26 per cent of all small-scale industries in the State, the same relative percentage in the case of Bankura district is as high as 84·2.

Rice mills

In 1964-65, there were 125 rice mills in the district, 99 of which were located in the Sadar subdivision and the remaining 26 were in Vishnupur subdivision. The main concentrations of rice mills in the Sadar subdivision were in Bankura town and at Jhantipahari where there were 50 and 21 rice mills respectively. Beliatore came next with 6 rice mills, and there were 3 of them at Onda and 2 at Chhatna. Most of the mills in Bankura town, Jhantipahari and Beliatore are electrified. Of the 26 rice mills in Vishnupur subdivision, 9 are at Vishnupur proper, 6 are at Indas, 3 at Sonamukhi and 2 at Patrasayer.

Places having only one rice mill each are too numerous to mention and they are dispersed all over the district. The average quantity of paddy purchased per year, between 1962 and 1964, by the rice mills in Bankura town was 5,94,500 quintals and the average annual production of rice was 3,63,395 quintals. The 21 rice mills at Jhantipahari purchased, over the same period, 2,39,440 quintals of paddy per year producing 1,57,630 quintals of rice annually. Vishnupur, situated in the rich agricultural belt of the district, has always been an important centre of rice milling while Beliatore, because of its proximity to the big industrial complex at Durgapur, has come up in recent years as a rice-producing centre. Most of the Vishnupur rice mills also use electricity.

Besides the 125 rice mills, there were, in 1965, 261 paddy husking machines operating all over the district.

Oil mills

In 1965, there were 8 oil mills in the district manufacturing edible oils other than hydrogenated oils. Five of them were located in Bankura town, two in Vishnupur and one at Jhantipahari.

Dāl (pulses) mills

There were five pulses mills in the district in 1965 of which three were in Bankura town and two at Beliatore.

Vishnupur tobacco

Vishnupur is justly famous for its scented hookah tobacco known as *amboori tāmāk.* Writing about it in 1908, O'Malley stated in the old Bankura District Gazetteer that "there are two tobacco manufactories in the town of Bishnupur from which a scented tobacco is exported to almost every part of Bengal. The process of preparation is kept a trade secret, and the price varies from Rs. 5 to Rs. 200 per maund." Although its quality has considerably deteriorated over the years the scented tobacco of Vishnupur finds a very ready market even now in all parts of West Bengal and Assam and in certain areas of Orissa and Madras. There was a time when its use was identified with aristocratic habits and well-to-do people could hardly do without it. Hookah smoking has generally declined in this part of the country and has been substituted by *biḍis* in the rural areas and cigarettes in the towns. A thriving *biḍi* industry has grown up in Vishnupur, the details of which have been mentioned earlier.

Cottage industries: Industrial arts

The cottage industries that exist in the district today, namely silk, *tassar*, cotton weaving, wool weaving, lac, conch-shell, brass and bell-metal, pottery, lantern-manufacture etc. have already been described as old-time industries and no account of them need be repeated here. A reference may, however, be made to an artistic craft, not mentioned before, which is rather peculiar to this district. It is known as the Dhokrā metal craft according to the name of the community of artisans practising it. The Dhokrās are one of the autochthonous tribes living in western Bankura. They are also to be found in western Midnapur, northern Orissa and certain parts of Madhya Pradesh. The Dhokrās of Bankura have been wholly Hinduized and now designate themselves as Dhokrā-kāmārs. They cast solid

metal objects in the *cire perdue* or lost-wax process which is traditionally practised not only by them but also by the bronze-casters of Swami-Malai, a village near Kumbhakonam in Madras.[1] Broadly speaking, the process consists of fashioning a prototype model in wax which is covered up with soft clay, leaving a passage for the wax to flow out when the mould is heated. After the clay has dried in the sun, the mould is heated and the wax drained off, leaving a cavity inside which is then filled up with molten metal, usually brass. When the metal solidifies, the earthen mould is broken and the metallic model taken out, chiselled and finished with necessary decorations. The Dhokrās of Bankura usually cast small icons, dolls, lamps, lamp-stands etc. most of which are meant for ritual purposes.

This exquisite craft was on the point of extinction when the All India Handicrafts Board took steps for its resuscitation. It is mainly due to their efforts that Dhokrā products have now become fashionable among the urban upper classes in India and abroad. In 1965, a group of 15 Dhokrā artisans living in the outskirts of Bankura town banded themselves into a co-operative society.

Industrial Potential and Plans for Future Development

In Bankura, an essentially agricultural district, the pressure on land has progressively increased owing, firstly, to an increase in population and, secondly, to the decline of cottage industries which has forced many artisans to take to cultivation. The present endeavour of the Government is, therefore, to develop as many of the old-time rural crafts as possible side by side with new industries so that the traditional craftsmen could return to their erstwhile professions relieving the present pressure on land. In order to be able to prosper in their humble callings, the rural artisans hardly need any training in skill; this they possess in ample measure. What they require badly is financial assistance, regular supply of cheap raw materials and proper marketing facilities for their products. The financial assistance rendered to them under the Bengal State Aid to Industries Act has already been described. The industrial co-operatives are entitled to receive Government loans equivalent to as much as ten times their paid-up share capitals. During the past few years, a number of specific schemes have been launched by the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal as also by other agencies for the resuscitation of rural industries. Some of them have been mentioned before and the rest are described below.

Sales emporia

To assist rural artisans in marketing their products, a chain of sales emporia has been set up in West Bengal which procure merchandise directly from the village workers or co-operative societies. There is a sales emporium in Bankura town run by the West Bengal Small Industries Corporation Ltd. which buys and sells cotton and silk

[1] Ruth Reeves—*Cire Perdue* Castings in India. Published by the Crafts Museum, New Delhi, 1962.

fabrics as also various other handicraft products turned out by the rural artisans of the district. From 1961-62 to 1963-64 the sale proceeds of this unit amounted to Rs. 21,095.

Extension centre for servicing facilities

An extension centre run by the Small Industries Service Institute, Ministry of Industry & Supply, Government of India is in the process of being set up at Bankura for extending servicing facilities to the local blacksmithy and carpentry industries. The centre will also impart improved training in these two trades.

Agro-based industries

There are very good prospects for agro-based industries in the district, particularly of rice mills and oil mills. The rice milling centre at Jhantipahari also handles the surplus paddy of the neighbouring district of Purulia. With increase in paddy cultivation (which is a State objective), more rice mills will be necessary. There is also a scope for increasing the number of oil mills as the eight existing units are not sufficient to meet the district's requirements.

It has already been stated that the silk industry of Bankura has registered a considerable improvement in recent years. There is further scope for the development of this industry.

Development of handloom industries

Under the scheme for re-organization of handloom industries, an industrial centre run by the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal, has been functioning in Bankura town since April 1, 1965 with the following objects: (*i*) to impart technical training in handloom weaving, (*ii*) to provide better marketing facilities by forming a marketing-cum-sales society and (*iii*) to arrange for procurement and distribution of raw materials.

In order to encourage this industry, which has good prospects in the district, a pilot project, sponsored by the Reserve Bank of India, has been started by the Central Co-operative Bank, Bankura and an officer under the control of the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Bankura is responsible for looking after it and offering extended facilities to the local weavers. The object of the project is to supply more yarns at economic prices, offer financial assistance and arrange for training of artisans in improved designs. The implementation of the project will ensure more employment as also production of handloom articles of superior quality.

China-clay products

The merits of the china-clay deposits in the district have already been discussed in Chapter I. Analysis of samples shows that there is also a good scope for the development of china-clay industry in Bankura.

LABOUR AND EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS

Up to 1965 there was no employers' organization in the district. In the same year there were, however, 11 workers' unions, the headquarters of which were mostly located in Bankura town; only two had their head offices at Sonamukhi. The total membership of these unions, all of which were registered under the Indian Trade Union Act of 1926, was 2,265. In point of numerical strength of members, the

Bankura District Biḍi Kārigar Union was by far the largest in the district followed by the Bankura Damodar River Railwaymen's Congress and the Bankura Telkal Sramik Union. The table below gives complete information about the trade union organizations in the district as they stood in 1965.

LIST OF TRADE UNIONS IN BANKURA DISTRICT

Regd. No.	Name of Union	Address	Membership (as on 31.3.65)
2592	Bānkurā District Biḍi Kārigar Union	Jināsini Lane, P.O. Bankura	809
4583	Bānkurā Dāmodar River Railwaymen's Congress	Nutanganj, P.O. Bankura	334
5364	Bānkurā Telkal Sramik Union	Jināsini Lane, P.O. Bankura	305
5215	Bānkurā Dāmodar River Railway Workers' Congress	P.O. Sonāmukhi	166
3254	Bānkurā Zilla Motor Mazdoor Sangha	Māchāntalā, P.O. Bankura	150
6229	Bānkurā Municipal Mazdoor Union	Lālbāzār, P.O. Bankura	150
6315	Bānkurā Muṭiā Samity	Lālbāzār, P.O. Bankura	105 (as on 8.6.65)
2887	Bānkurā Municipal Employees' Union	Bepārihāṭ, P.O. Bankura	102
6230	Bānkurā Gārwān Samity	Lālbāzār, P.O. Bankura	86
5780	Sonāmukhi Swarnasilpi Samity	P.O. Sonāmukhi	38
4585	West Bengal Power Supply Mazdoor Union	P.O. Bankura	20
		TOTAL	2,265

WELFARE OF INDUSTRIAL LABOUR

The registered factories in the district are governed by the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 which prescribe different classifications in respect of the wages for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labourers. The wages are fixed on the basis of Average Consumers' Price Index and are, as such, subject to fluctuations. For instance, a skilled worker earning a monthly wage of Rs. 56 in 1958 was getting Rs. 62.48 in 1965 owing to an upward revision of the Consumers' Price Index. The wage rate for a *biḍi* worker in 1965 was fixed at Rs. 2.80 for producing 1,000 *biḍis* and those working on a monthly wage got Rs. 50 in all.

There is an Inspector of Minimum Wages under the control of the West Bengal Labour Directorate with headquarters at Midnapur who looks after the industrial establishments in Bankura as well for

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effective implementation of the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act. He receives complaints and takes necessary action against violation of the said Act.

Labour welfare centres

As part of its labour welfare programme, the West Bengal Labour Directorate runs a labour welfare centre at Gorābāri with a branch at Khatra. These are the two places in Khatra police station where there has been a sizable concentration of industrial workers in connexion with the construction of the Kangsabati Dam. The centres provide the following amenities to local labour:

(*i*) Primary classes are regularly held at both the centres for the workers' children. Such education is free and books, pencils, slates etc. are also supplied free of charge.

(*ii*) Each centre has a small library with a collection of select books in Bengali. Daily newspapers and periodicals are also supplied to these centres free of cost.

(*iii*) There are also arrangements for education through the media of radio, documentary films and other audio-visual aids made available by the District Information office at Bankura. The centre at Gorābāri has been provided with one radio set.

(*iv*) Both the labour welfare centres are also equipped with facilities for indoor and outdoor games. Various musical instruments are also there. In 1964, the Gorabari Labour Welfare Centre organized the birthday centenary of Swami Vivekananda with active participation of the workers. While the labour welfare centre at Gorabari is managed, financed and run by the West Bengal Labour Directorate, the one at Khatra is run jointly by the Labour Directorate and the Kangsabati Project Administration.

CHAPTER VI

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

BANKING AND FINANCE

Early banking practices in the district

"The prosperity of Bengal before Plassey was ascribed by Verelst to the 'cheapness and quality and the prodigious traffic of her manufactures. Besides the large investments of the different European nations, the Bengal raw silk, cloths etc. to a vast amount were dispersed to the West and North inland as far as Guzrat, Lahore and even Ispahan.' The disorder and anarchy in the Asiatic countries, the break up of the Mughal Empire, the flow of cheaper Chinese silk and Dutch sugar to the ports on the western coast of India, no doubt, led to considerable reduction of this prodigious traffic. The Bargi incursions into Bengal created some temporary dislocation on her western frontier. But the effects of these disturbances must not be magnified. . . . In spite of occasional disturbances the cotton cloth and silk stuff of Bengal must have sold almost as before in different parts of India and the neighbouring regions. The house of Jagat Seth was at the height of its prosperity in the beginning of 1757. But during the period from 1757 to 1772 the servants of the English East India Company with their retinue of agents and *gomastās* were responsible for such proceedings as deterred all these merchants (indigenous traders—Ed.) from different parts of India from coming to Bengal. The dominance of the privileged British private traders completely changed the state of the Indian market and in the 1760's and 1770's it was very different from what it was in the 1750's."[1] Hereabouts, began the growth of numerous *āurangs* of cotton, silk and indigo manufacture set up by the East India Company all over Bengal. One such centre was at Sonamukhi.[2]

Naturally enough, with the increasing importance of such centres of manufacture and trade, banking transactions in the modern sense of the term gradually became necessary in and around these places. Unfortunately, however, we do not possess any evidence as to the growth of banking activities in the district till about a century later. Hunter, in his Statistical Account of Bengal, published in 1876, wrote: "The Collector (of Bankura), in 1871, reported to me that only two indigo factories were conducted in the District under European management and with imported capital, but was unable to furnish any statistics regarding the amount of profit derived from

[1] N. K. Sinha—The Economic History of Bengal: from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1961. pp. 109-11.

[2] See Chapter II and entry 'Sonamukhi' in Chapter XVI.

them. There are no silk filatures or factories in Bankura conducted by Europeans."[1] Commenting on the position of capital and interest in the district, he said: "accumulations of money obtained by trade are partly hoarded and partly employed as capital in trade and manufactures, but rarely expended in the improvement of the land."[2] The rates of interest for credit current at the time were as follows: (i) in small loan transactions where the borrower pawned some valuable object the price of which was higher than the sum borrowed, the annual rate of interest varied between 12 and 18 per cent; (ii) in large transactions where some movable property was mortgaged, the rate of interest was somewhat higher and ranged from 18 to 20 per cent since there was some risk of alienation of the property pledged making it difficult on the part of the mortgagee to realize it in execution of a decree; (iii) in large transactions, where some immovable property like lands and houses was mortgaged, the rate of interest was from 9 to 12 per cent as the risk involved was less; and (iv) in petty agricultural advances to farmers, either on the personal security of the borrower or with a lien on the crops, the rate of interest varied between 18 and as high as 36 per cent. As for money invested in the purchase of land, 6 to 7 per cent per annum was considered to be a fair return. There were no regular indigenous banking establishments in the district as such when Hunter wrote, and loans were advanced by village shop-keepers, money-lenders or *mahājans*, or by the zemindars themselves.[3]

Rural and Urban indebtedness: credit facilities available in the district

The rural indebtedness noticed by Hunter in the second half of the 19th century was merely the heralding symptom of an economic malady that assumed very serious proportions at the beginning of the present century. Robertson, in his Settlement Report of Bankura, quoted the following passage from a note of the Collector of the district written in 1920 : "The average cultivator is heavily in debt. He hands over the greater part of his harvest to his *mahājan* to meet the existing obligations and, as he is usually unable to maintain himself with the balance till the next harvest, he has to borrow again a few months after. He pursues his career of borrowing and repaying from year's end to year's end, always adding to his burden and never making any advance towards release. ... The *mahājan* advances the raw material, pays the wages and buys the finished article. The workman would have some reason for gratitude if only he had a voice in fixing the rate of remuneration of these services. ... As a result wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists and the best lands are owned by them."[4]

[1] W. W. Hunter—A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. II. London, 1876. p. 278.
[2] Ibid. p. 277.
[3] Ibid. pp. 277-78.
[4] F. W. Robertson—Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura (1917-1924). Calcutta, 1926. pp. 17-18.

Analysing the reasons of the general indebtedness of the people, Robertson goes on to say: "The real cause of the general indebtedness is to be found in the narrow margin which is left to the cultivator from the produce of his land to set by in case of an emergency after feeding himself and his family. It is true that the ordinary cultivator is thriftless. It is true that the aboriginal at least will spend what money he can lay his hands on in the liquor shop. It is true, too, that the cost of marrying their children is a heavy burden for the cultivators. Among the lower classes in the district it is not the bridegroom who was to be bought, but the bride. ... With so narrow a margin, even in a normal year it is inevitable that sooner or later the cultivator will have to borrow. In a bad year he must borrow paddy for food and for seed. For such special occasions as a marriage he must borrow money.

"The rates of interest charged are high. For small loans up to Rs. 50, the rate is 6 pies per rupee per month, for larger loans from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500, 3 pies per rupee per month is charged. For loans over Rs. 500, the usual rate is from Re. 1 to Rs. 1-4 per 100 rupees per month. Interest on loans in kind is also high. Paddy borrowed in *Srāban* or *Bhādra* (July-September) must be paid in *Paush* or *Māgh* (December-February) with interest at the rate of 2 *solis* per *māp* or 25 per cent."[1]

That the solution of this serious problem of indebtedness lay in the fostering of co-operative organizations was generally recognized. It was with a view to finding out the difficulties that stood in the way of making credit facilities available to agriculture and to small industries as also to build up a co-operative credit structure that the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee was set up in 1929. After an extensive survey of the different districts of Bengal for a year (1929-30), the Committee published its report in 1930.

Jadunath Sarkar, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Western Circle, while deposing before the Committee said that in the Burdwan division the interest charged by the *mahājans* varied between 12 and 14 per cent only and hence the people as a rule did not take the trouble to borrow from the co-operative societies like people in East and North Bengal.[2] It was concluded by the Committee that the rate of interest charged by the co-operative societies in this area, though somewhat lower than that demanded by the *mahājans*, did not really make any difference. In Bankura, for instance, the rate of interest charged by the co-operative societies was 12½ per cent. In reply to a questionnaire circulated by the Committee, the District Agricultural Officer of Bankura stated that co-operative societies in his district granted loans to ten or more persons individually

[1] ibid. p. 20.
[2] Report of the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-30, Vol. III. Calcutta, 1930. pp. 103-06.

or under joint liability and charged interest at the rate of 12½ per cent. The co-operative irrigation society advanced loans to ten or more persons individually or under joint liability and charged 9⅜ per cent as the rate of interest. The Government advanced loans under the Improvement Act, 1883 and Loans Act, 1884 at 6¼ per cent interest. According to the evidence of this officer, the *mahājans* in the district charged 25 per cent upon advance of paddy payable within six months without any security and 14 to 18¾ per cent upon advances of cash, on mortgage of lands or other immovable properties. Paddy was sometimes advanced without any security to reliable and solvent persons. In reply to the Committee's question : "Describe the part played in agricultural finance by Government, the Imperial Bank of India, the Joint Stock Banks, Co-operative Banks, the indigenous banks and bankers, professional money-lenders, merchants and dealers and other organizations giving credit", the same officer replied that agricultural finance in the district was mostly in the hands of professional *mahājans*, the Co-operative Banks etc. having only a small share. As to the question of any defects in the prevailing system of financing agriculture, the reasons for such defects and possible remedies, the reply was that in the case of Government loans, people had to apply more than a year in advance. Payments had to be made within the fixed time in instalments, on every 31st January and 30th June. The reasons for this practice was that otherwise the money would not have been allotted in the budget grant for that year. The remedy suggested was that money should be kept in reserve with the Government so that people would get ready cash within three months of application. "There should be only one instalment of payment, viz. 28th February, as paddy, the principal crop, is not thrashed and disposed of before the end of February."[1] The same officer further pointed out that the main defect in the system of financing agriculture in Bankura district was that it was mostly in the hands of professional money-lenders "who look solely to their own interest to the ultimate ruin of the borrowers." Describing the existing method of marketing principal crops in the district, he said that the leading buyers were the local merchants, *āratdārs* (godown-owners) or rice-millers who formed the main agencies for financing agricultural marketing in the countryside and they could very well dictate their own terms as the average farmer, constantly in debt and having no bargaining power, knew of no better alternative than to submit to their unfair demands. On the point whether agricultural indebtedness was increasing or decreasing in his district, the officer maintained that there was no sign of its decreasing and that the creditors, by and large, were the professional money-

[1] Ibid. Vol. II, Part I, pp. 250-53.

lenders rather than the Government, the banks or the co-operative societies. The extent of the needs of the local agriculturists being met by the Land Improvements Loans Act of 1883 and the Agriculturists' Loans Act of 1884 was very limited in his opinion. He also affirmed that itinerant money-lenders such as the *Kābulis* were to be found in his district and the method of their operation was to advance money to the cultivators without any security which had to be repaid in one instalment after an year with interest at 100 to 150 per cent. Continuing his evidence, the officer stated that the rate of interest charged in the Bankura district for paddy loans for seed purposes was 50 per cent and for other purposes 25 per cent. The rates of interest on cash loans varied between 14 and 18¾ per cent and interest had to be paid for the month in which the loan was taken, but not for the month on which it was repaid. In the case of loans of grain, interest was realized for one full year even if repayment was made earlier.

The findings of the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee (1929-30) showed that rural indebtedness had increased to such an extent that it had started to affect the agricultural economy of Bengal very adversely. In the years following the publication of the Committee's report, an attempt was made to tackle this problem, if only partially. On the recommendations made by the Bengal Board of Economic Enquiry in 1934, the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act was passed in 1935 and came into force in July 1936 and on subsequent dates in different districts. In Bankura the Act came into operation from the 11th November 1937.[1] It is to be noted that only the debts incurred prior to the 1st of January 1940, were entertainable under this Act. Although applications to the Debt Settlement Boards set up under the provisions of the Act were not obligatory, parties were urged, through publicity and propaganda, to apply and the debtors almost invariably approached the Boards. When a case came up before a Board, it tried by persuasion and appeals to the "moral sense of the creditors" to scale down the amount of repayable debt that was to be determined and to provide for repayment in easy instalments not exceeding 20 years. An effort was always made to achieve an amicable settlement before taking resort to compulsive measures. There was also a provision for appeal to the District Judge for revision against any decision or order of the Board and against the order of the ordinary Appellate Officer. The orders of the District Judges were also subject to revision by the High Court.

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[1] Source: Report from the Co-operation Department, Govt. of West Bengal. This report failed to supply particular details for the district of Bankura, but gave a general survey of the area now known as West Bengal. One of the reasons for the incompleteness of the report, it was pointed out, was that many relevant records had been taken away to East Pakistan at the time of the partition of the country.

The report on the progress of work done by the Debt Settlement Boards up to March 31, 1949 in West Bengal showed that about 7,81,100 cases were filed by that date and that 41 per cent of the applications were from the creditors. Over 7,77,300 cases were disposed of (including dismissals and transfers) leaving about 3,740 cases pending on 31st March 1949. The money value of the claims amounted to about Rs. 9,67,12,000 which was determined under section 18 of the Act at Rs. 6,55,63,400 and was further reduced to Rs. 5,17,15,500 in awards. Thus, the percentage of final reduction was over 47 per cent.

After independence, the problem of rural indebtedness naturally engaged the attention of the Government of India at whose instance an all-India rural credit survey was undertaken by the Reserve Bank of India in 1951-52. The report of this survey together with the reports of several follow-up surveys remain, to this day, the most detailed and comprehensive source of information about rural indebtedness in India although they have occasionally been criticized from some technical and methodological points of view.[1] The districts chosen in West Bengal for the credit survey of the Reserve Bank and the follow-up surveys of 1956-57, 1957-58 and 1958-59[2] did not include Bankura and, as such, there is no authoritative and comprehensive information about banking, finance and credit facilities in the district. A comparatively recent survey of a village in Bankura conducted by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bhārati, however, provides us with a report on a case study which can very well serve as a model. It will not, therefore, be out of place to recapitulate some of the findings of this study in the present context.[3] The village was first surveyed in May 1956 and re-surveyed in May 1960.

Kāshipur is a village in Sonamukhi police station of Vishnupur subdivision. It lies at a distance of 51 km. (32 miles) from the district town and 10 km. (6 miles) east-southeast of Sonamukhi.

Analysing the credit situation in the village at the time of the survey and that of the re-survey, the authors of the monograph draw the following revealing conclusions:

"Before the institution of the C.D.P. (Community Development Programme) in the area the sources of credit were mostly individual

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[1] cf. Daniel & Alice Thorner—Land and Labour in India. Bombay, 1962. pp. 189-224.

[2] (a) Reports on the All India Rural Credit Survey, Vol. II: The General Report. Bombay, 1952.
(b) Rural Credit Follow-up Survey, 1956-57: General Review Report. Bombay, 1960.
(c) Rural Credit Follow-up Survey, 1957-58: General Review Report. Bombay, 1961.
(d) Rural Credit Follow-up Survey, 1958-59: General Review Report. Bombay, 1961.

[3] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—Kashipur: A Report on Re-Survey of a Village. Santiniketan, 1962.

substantial farmers or traders or a few village widows. One of the characteristic features of the credit structure of the village was that credit in kind formed a substantial portion of the total transaction. Rates of interest charged by individual creditors were exorbitantly high, the highest rate having been recorded at 75 per cent. The C.D.P. agency became an important source of finance in the area during its 'intensive phase' of operation. With the withdrawal of the intensive programme (C.D.P.), *the credit structure had again assumed its traditional character*."[1] (italics, Editor's).

Passing on to the analysis of how indebtedness and borrowings changed during the period under study, it was observed : "Remarkably enough the reduction of debt per household was largest for the class of service and miscellaneous labour (100 per cent), the agricultural workers occupying the next position (79 per cent) in this regard. This was obviously the result of increase in income. ... The increase in income enabled these people to repay a substantial part of their debt. None of the classes was an exception to this process."[2]

DEBTS PER HOUSEHOLD[3]

Occupational groups	1956	1960	% change-over (±) 1956
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned	280.60	113.03	−59.72
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned	415.83	187.50	−54.91
Agricultural labour	46.08	9.74	--78.86
Production other than cultivation	223.92	137.50	−38.59
Service, Profession and Miscellaneous	27.04	—	—
TOTAL	176.16	71.86	−59.21

"Analysis of debt per indebted household presents a little different picture. It shows that debt per indebted household of agricultural labour increased to some extent (18 per cent). It is obvious that a few agricultural labour-households were particularly in distress and could not avail themselves of good-earning-opportunities to which other classes enjoyed larger access. The rate of reduction of debt per indebted household for the cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned, though second to that for the service-profession-miscellaneous class, was substantial (38 per cent); the cultivators of land mainly or wholly unowned could also reduce their debt but at

[1] ibid. p. 12.
[2] ibid. p. 62.
[3] ibid. pp. 62-63: Table 6.2 (c).

a slightly lower rate (21 per cent). It may also be noted that the rate of reduction of current borrowings was greater than that of the old debts. Moreover, the level of current indebtedness in kind was lowered for all classes at rates much higher than those for current cash debts; the overall reduction of such debts was to the tune of 86 per cent while that for the cash debts was 71 per cent."[1]

DEBTS PER INDEBTED HOUSEHOLD[2]

Occupational groups	1956	1960	% change-over (±) 1956
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned	438.44	273.17	−37.69
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned	415.83	328.31	−21.09
Agricultural labour	50.27	60.40	+18.16
Production other than cultivation	335.88	275.00	−18.13
Service, Profession and Miscellaneous	36.59	—	—
TOTAL	214.25	250.19	+16.78

There was also a considerable change in the sources of borrowing during the period under study. It is apparent from the foregoing figures that "the importance of Government, relative, neighbour and *Mahajan* (professional money-lender) as sources of borrowing declined. Though in respect of old debts Government source increased from 1 per cent to 9 per cent, in the case of current borrowings it was diminished from 28 per cent to 4 per cent. This is the result of the withdrawal of the Community Development Programme which also led to a curtailment of credit-provision by Government. The decline of the professional money-lender, however, might be less real than apparent. The distinction between the money-lender and the cultivator might have been forgotten by the informant in view of the fact that both of them combine functions of each other. Even after making allowance for this the fact that the cultivator was playing an increasingly important role in the field of credit is not questionable. Thus, while 0.4 per cent and 18.7 per cent of the current borrowings came from cultivator and *Mahajan* respectively in 1956, 94 per cent of such borrowings came from the cultivator in 1960—the *Mahajan* making no loans. Emergence of the substantial cultivator as a very important source of credit was a new development and largely due to the accumulation of liquid resources in his hands."[3]

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[1] Ibid. p. 64. The last mentioned figures appear in pp. 62-63: Table 6.2(b).
[2] Ibid. pp. 62-63: Table 6.2 (c)
[3] Ibid. p. 64.

DEBTS BY NATURE AND SOURCE IN KASHIPUR VILLAGE, BANKURA: 1956-60[1]

Source of borrowing	Old Debts								Current Debts							
	Cash (Rs.)				Kind (Mds. of paddy)				Cash (Rs.)				Kind (Mds. of paddy)			
	1956		1960		1956		1960		1956		1960		1956		1960	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Mds.	%	Mds.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Mds.	%	Mds.	%
Government ..	43.0	1.1	290.0	8.6	—	—	—	—	2,190.0	27.6	100.0	4.4	15.0	5.2	—	—
Cultivator ..	—	—	2,000.0	59.0	—	—	87.0	93.5	36.0	0.4	2,140.0	93.8	21.5	7.5	39.0	97.5
Mahajan ..	2,292.0	58.6	—	—	—	—	6.0	6.5	1,487.0	18.7	—	—	1.0	10.8	1.0	2.5
Relative ..	934.0	23.9	800.0	23.6	16.5	31.4	—	—	3,789.0	47.7	40.0	1.8	136.9	47.6	—	—
Neighbour ..	9.0	0.2	—	—	3.0	5.7	—	—	376.0	4.7	—	—	55.0	19.2	—	—
Unspecified ..	636.5	16.2	300.0	8.8	33.0	62.9	—	—	70.0	0.9	—	—	28.0	9.7	—	—
Total ..	3,914.5	100.0	3,390.0	100.0	52.5	100.0	93.0	100.0	7,948.0	100.0	2,280.0	100.0	287.4	100.0	40.0	100.0

[1] Ibid. p. 65: Table 6.3.

DISTRIBUTION OF DEBTS BY PURPOSE IN KASHIPUR VILLAGE, BANKURA : 1956-60[1]

Purpose	Old Debts								Current Debts							
	Cash (Rs.)				Kind (Mds. of paddy)				Cash (Rs.)				Kind (Mds. of paddy)			
	1956		1960		1956		1960		1956		1960		1956		1960	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Mds.	%	Mds.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Mds.	%	Mds.	%
Consumption Credit																
Family expenses	611.0	15.6	650.0	19.2	40.0	76.2	75.0	80.6	2,703.0	34.1	200.0	8.8	129.95	45.2	38.0	95.0
Marriage expenses	2,150.0	54.9	1,900.0	56.1	—	—	18.0	19.4	1,845.0	23.2	560.0	24.6	116.50	40.5	2.0	5.0
Medical expenses ..	62.0	1.6	300.0	8.8	—	—	—	—	500.0	6.2	680.0	29.8	14.0	4.9	—	—
Sub-total ..	2,823.0	72.1	2,850.0	84.1	40 0	76.2	93.0	100.0	5,048.0	63.5	1,440.0	63.2	260.45	90.6	40.0	100.0
Production Credit																
Cultivation expenses ..	—	—	—	—	7.5	14.3	—	—	75.0	0.9	200.0	8.8	9.0	3.1	—	—
Business expenses ..	750.0	19.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	575.0	7.3	500.0	21.9	—	—	—	—
Repayment of old debts ..	-	—	300.0	8 8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Purchase of livestock ..	183.0	4.6	40.0	1.2	—	—	—	—	650.0	8.2	100.0	4.3	6.0	2.1	—	—
House building ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	470.0	5.9	40.0	1.8	—	—	—	—
Crushing machine ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	350.0	4.4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sub-total ..	933.0	23.8	340.0	10.0	7.5	14.3	—	—	2,120.0	26.7	840.0	36.8	15.0	5.2	—	—
Unspecified (others) ..	158.5	4.1	200.0	5.9	5.0	9.5	—	—	780.0	9.8	—	—	12.0	4.2	—	—
Total ..	3,914.5	100.0	3,390.0	100.0	52.5	100.0	93.0	100.0	7,948.0	100.0	2,280.0	100.0	287 45	100.0	40.0	100.0

[1] Ibid. p. 66: Table 6.4.

DISTRIBUTION OF DEBTS BY RATE OF INTEREST IN KASHIPUR VILLAGE, BANKURA: 1956-60[1]

Rate of interest	Old Debts (Cash)				Current Debts (Cash)			
	1956		1960		1956		1960	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
0	1,052.50	29.9	800.00	23.6	3,633.00	45.7	690.00	30.3
1-5	—	—	—	—	200.00	2.5	—	—
6-10	—	—	290.00	8.6	2,620.00	33.0	100.00	4.4
11-15	1,500.00	38.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
16-20	500.00	12.8	—	—	450.00	5.7	—	—
21-25	700.00	17.9	1,700.00	50.1	480.00	6.0	750.00	32.9
26-30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
31-35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
36-40	62.00	1.6	600.00	17.7	565.00	7.1	740.00	32.4
40 and above	100.00	2.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	3,914.50	100.0	3,390.00	100.0	7,948.00	100.0	2,280.00	100.0

[1] ibid. p. 67 ; Table 6.5.

"Analysis of the purposes of borrowings of the Kashipur households in 1956 and 1960 shows that in respect of old debts there was some enhancement of consumption credit as compared to production credit. The entire kind portion of the old debts amounting to 93 mds. was utilized in consumption in 1960, while the proportion of kind loans for consumption was only 76.2 per cent of the total debts in kind in 1956. The elements of medical and marriage expenses were largely responsible for increase in the consumption credit in 1960. These expenses by nature being irregular, the change cannot claim to be enduring. In respect of current cash borrowings the proportion of consumption credit remained more or less the same in 1960 as in 1956. There was no borrowing in kind in 1960 either for consumption or for production purposes."[1]

"In general we can say that, though there was reduction of borrowings, there was little change of the credit-motive in favour of productive investment. ....Wherever there was any new investment the major source of finance for it was self-supplied funds coming either out of current incomes or past savings of the households.

"Turning to the question of rates of interest we find that in 1956 only 22 per cent of the old debts were bearing interest at rates above 20 per cent. In 1960, 68 per cent of such debts were subject to rates of interest higher than 20 per cent. In 1956 only 4 per cent of the old debts were subject to rates of interest higher than 35 per cent. These rates of interest were applicable to nearly 18 per cent of the old debts in 1960. Current debts bearing interest above 20 per cent increased from 13 per cent to 65 per cent of the total during the period under review. Current debts bearing interest above 35 per cent increased from 7 per cent to 32 per cent of the total debts. The rise in proportion of borrowings at higher rates of interest during the period under study appears to be a retrogressive change in the field of rural credit at Kashipur. It may be reasonably assumed that the contraction of Government credit which has already been observed earlier was mainly responsible for the situation."[2]

Co-operative Credit Societies and Joint Stock Banks

It has been seen that the sources of credit in the district had for a long time been controlled by professional money-lenders, middlemen and such other persons. In recent years there may have been a tendency for more prosperous cultivators to take up the role of creditors in rural societies. In this context, the part played by the Government and co-operative societies has not been very significant.

Among the co-operative societies in the district, the pride of place goes to the (District) Central Co-operative Bank of Bankura, with its head office at Bankura town and a branch office at Vishnupur. It functions like all other District Central Co-operative Banks throughout India, i.e. it has as its members the central societies

[1] Ibid. pp. 64-67.
[2] Ibid. pp. 67-68.

(usually at the thana level), primary societies (usually at the village level), individuals and others who are the depositors. The borrowings of the Central Bank consist of loans from the Reserve Bank of India and the West Bengal Provincial Co-operative Bank, loans from Government, as also loans from others. The District Bank, in its turn, advances loans to co-operative societies, individuals and others and invests in Government securities, other trustee securities, fixed deposits and in other investments. Besides the Central Co-operative Bank of Bankura, there are two important non-agricultural credit societies in the district, namely the Bankura Town Co-operative Bank and the Vishnupur Town Co-operative Bank.

The State Bank of India has branch offices at the district headquarters and at Vishnupur and functions, in both the places, as bank-treasurer in addition to its normal business. Besides, the Central Bank of India, the United Industrial Bank and the United Bank of India have each a branch office in Bankura town. The Bank of Bankura which was established in Calcutta in 1936, has also a branch office at the district headquarters.[1]

National Savings

During 1965-66 the National Savings organization functioning in the district was instrumental in effecting the following savings from the members of the public.[2]

Description of item	Amount (Rs.)
Sale of National Defence Certificates	19,25,770
Collections from Postal Savings Bank deposits	12,68,800
Cumulative Time Deposit collections	34,000
Sale of National Savings Certificates (issued for the first time in 1965-66)	14,16,970

On March 31, 1966 there were 49,397 Postal Savings accounts in the district with a total deposit of Rs. 2,88,02,852.

Insurance

The Asansol Divisional Office of the Life Insurance Corporation of India controls the life insurance business in the four administrative districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura and Midnapur. The organizational set-up of the L.I.C. is that a divisional office controls several branch offices which again have under them sub-offices and development centres. There are no sub-offices or development centres in Bankura district; there is only one branch office in Bankura town.

L.I.C.'s business is primarily secured by agents holding licences from the Controller of Insurance and having valid appointments under the Corporation. Preliminary reviews of the proposals

[1] Statistical Tables relating to Banks in India, Reserve Bank of India, 1964. Statistical Statements relating to Co-operative Movement in India: Reserve Bank of India. Bombay, 1960.

[2] Source: Assistant Regional Director, National Savings Organization, Calcutta.

received by the branch offices are done at the branch level and then forwarded to the divisional office from where policies are issued. Service to the policy-holders is rendered both from the divisional and branch offices according to the nature of requirements of the policy-holders. To supervise the work of agents, Field Officers have been appointed by the Corporation, a number of whom work within the territorial jurisdiction of each branch office.[1] According to a report received from the Divisional Manager, L.I.C., 2,749 life insurance proposals for a total sum of Rs. 99,47,000 were received from the district during 1965-66 against which 2,653 policies covering an amount of Rs. 98,78,600 were issued.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

Course of trade

In the 19th century, Bankura used to enjoy in normal years a marketable surplus of its principal agricultural products, especially rice, the export of which to neighbouring areas and to Calcutta constituted one of the chief items of the trade of the district. As Bankura was (and still is) a primarily agricultural district, it was but natural that its trade in agricultural products played a very important role in its economy in the past. Describing the marketing conditions in Bankura in the latter half of the 19th century, Hunter wrote: "The local manufactures suffice to meet the local demand, and a considerable surplus is left over for export to other Districts and to Calcutta. The staple products of the District, viz. rice, is also more than sufficient for all local wants, and the surplus is exported to neighbouring parts, principally to Hugli and Midnapur. Besides rice, other chief articles of export are oil-seeds, lac, cotton and silk cloth, silk cocoons etc. The principal articles received in exchange for the commodities exported from the District are English piece-goods, salt, tobacco, spices, coconuts and pulses of different kinds. The principal seats of commerce are the towns of Bankura and Bishnupur and the villages of Rajagram and Barjora. Trade is carried on chiefly by means of permanent markets, but also through the medium of fairs and religious festivals. The Collector states that there is every reason to believe that the exports are much greater than the imports and that a considerable accumulation of coin is going on in consequence of the balance of trade being in favour of the District. Several of the *mahajans* or traders are said to have amassed considerable wealth."[2]

The fact of the *mahājans* growing rich on internal trade was a phenomenon not only peculiar to the second half of the last century but it continued to operate with unabated vigour well into the present. It was to study the exact nature of the hold of such traders and middlemen over the rural markets that the Government of Bengal

[1] Report from the Life Insurance Corporation of India, Eastern Zonal Office, Calcutta.

[2] W. W. Hunter—A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV. p. 277.

decided to set up an Enquiry Committee to look into the marketing of agricultural produce in Bengal in 1926, i.e. on the eve of the formation of the Royal Agricultural Commission. The report of the Enquiry Committee gave a detailed account of marketing conditions for every crop, district by district. Since we have no other comparative estimate of this nature for recent years, it may be useful to examine some of the findings of this Committee.

"In rural Bengal, the internal trade is chiefly carried on at the *hāṭs* or markets which are commonly held two days in a week. *Hāṭs* are scattered so profusely over the province that a cultivator in almost any district can attend one every day without going more than five or six miles from home. At these *hāṭs* business is carried on in all kinds of agricultural produce and the transactions are mainly between one cultivator and another. At the important *hāṭs*, a certain amount of collecting business is done by middlemen for export. The middlemen play an important part in the business. Conditions, however, vary in respect of different crops and in different localities. In the case of commercial crops, the number of middlemen is greatly larger than in the case of food crops. Ordinarily, these middlemen fall into three categories, viz. (i) *fariās*' or *pāikārs*' men of small capital who collect the produce and sell it to (ii) *bepāris* and (iii) *āratdārs* who are established at the principal markets. These sell in turn to merchants who either dispose of the goods locally or export them."[1]

Speaking about the course of trade and marketing conditions, crop by crop, based on evidence collected from every district, the report observed: "When the paddy has been threshed, the producer, to pay the rent or to clear his debts to the money-lender, generally sells some of it direct to the consumers in the nearest town or bazar. The rest is stored for household use or for sale. Ordinarily, the grower does not sell directly to the retailer. But when he is in great need of money, he will sell it at retailer's stall. The most usual channel is for the cultivators to sell paddy and rice to *fariās* or itinerant traders in the villages and at *hāṭs* or at other neighbouring markets. The *fariās* sell the produce to *āratdārs*, who in turn send them to big city markets. Of the intermediaries, the *bepāris* sometimes work on their own capital or are financed by *āratdārs*, local *mahājans* or purchasing merchants. *Āratdārs* are either self-financed or are financed by merchants or mills. The margin of profit on which the intermediaries work varies with local conditions. In the Burdwan Division, the *fariās* and *āratdārs* work on a profit varying from one anna to two annas per maund of paddy sold and mill-owners make a profit varying from annas six to annas eight per maund of rice sold."[2]

[1] Marketing of Agricultural Produce in Bengal, 1926. Calcutta, 1928. p. 6.
[2] loc. cit.

As for the marketing of rice in Bankura, evidence was adduced by S. G. Hart, Collector of the district, who wrote to the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Bengal to say that: "The only crop of any great importance in this district is paddy. The varieties harvested up to the end of *Kārttik* (October-November) are known as *āus*. Owing to the dryness of the district, early *āus* is little grown. Most of the kinds of *āus* cultivated are late varieties and are transplanted. The largest portion of the paddy crop is *haimantik* which is harvested in *Agrahāyan* (November-December) and *Paush* (December-January) and only transplanted varieties of *haimantik* paddy are cultivated. . . . Most of the rice and paddy exported is taken by the Bankura Damodar River Railway and the Bengal Nagpur Railway to the big Calcutta market at Chetla and some also is taken to other large industrial centres such as Kharagpur and Tatanagar. From the north-western corner of the district, some paddy also is conveyed across Damodar river to Asansol, Raniganj and Durgapur and is then either sold in these markets or transported by the East Indian Railway to Calcutta and other industrial towns on the Hooghly, e.g. Barrackpore. Paddy is bought from cultivators by *mahājans* or their agents and conveyed by carts to the railway stations or to the rice mills or *ārats*. The cost of carting is about 4 annas per maund per day in ordinary times but during the rains when the rivers are in flood the rate may be as much as 8 annas. The commission charge of a *mahājan* working on behalf of a Calcutta firm averages about 2 annas a maund and the commission paid to a *mahājan's* agent varies from 2 pice to 6 pice per maund. The system of *dādan* (advance) is not much in vogue in this district except in respect of *haimantik* paddy. For that crop *dādan* may be given at any time between *Baisākh* (April-May) and *Bhādra* (August-September) and it is always given in the shape of seed paddy. The quantity advanced is repaid with a surplus of 25 per cent in *Māgh* (January-February) or *Phālgun* (February-March)."[1]

Among other marketable products of the district, S. G. Hart mentioned of lac and silk to be of some importance. The yields of these commodities and the trade practices followed in respect of their marketing are best described in his own words: "In the neighbourhood of Khatra, Saltora, Sonamukhi etc., lac is grown and there are small factories at Khatra and Sonamukhi. In Bankura the major portion of lac produced finds its way to these factories and are then exported to Calcutta. Some of the lac is also taken to Manbhum district. The lac trade is encumbered by a large number of middlemen who intervene between the actual collector and the manufacturer and shipper. By a system of advances, the collectors of stick plant and the small manufacturers are bound to the middlemen to whom alone

[1] *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

they can sell. Brokers again intervene at the port of shipment. . . . The commission of the broker is about Rs. 5 per maund. . . . Mulberry silkworms are reared to a small extent in a few villages but most of the silk weavers of Vishnupur and Sonamukhi buy silk from Malda and Murshidabad through local dealers. Tasar silk cocoons are generally imported from Chaibassa, Jamtara, Giridih, Dumka and Mayurbhanj. The weavers of Vishnupur and Bankura buy the cocoons from the dealers who come here."[1]

There was no proper arrangement for dissemination of marketing information at that time. According to Hart, "local dealers keep themselves informed as to the market rates current in Calcutta from day to day but the cultivators are entirely dependant on what they hear from the local dealers. The agricultural statistics and crop forecasts published by the Government are of no use either to the cultivators or to the local dealers. The only measure which can be suggested for the benefit of local people is that the Government should publish or subsidize a reliable agency for publishing periodical market news in bulletins which should be issued to all Presidents of rural Unions for the information of the public."[2]

It appears from a recent report sent by the Agricultural Marketing Officer of Bankura that conditions of marketing in the district had not substantially changed till very recently. Speaking of the period before the introduction of State trading in food-grains, the officer pointed out that it was the custom of the producers to sell their paddy either directly to the rice mills or to the *pāikārs*, who in turn sold it to the rice mills. The rice mills sold rice to various categories of traders who either exported the same to different places outside the district or sold it in the local markets. An exactly similar practice obtained in the case of pulses. As for other food crops, sugarcane was crushed mostly by the growers who sold the *gur* produced either locally or to *pāikārs*. Non-food crops like fibres of different types were sold either to the *pāikārs* or directly to big businessmen. Commenting on the part played by different intermediaries, it was mentioned that *farīās* collected the produce from actual growers in some cases and sold them to the big *pāikārs* who either sent them to big business centres or sold them to stockists within the district. In most cases the traders purchased the various crops from the primary producers through a system of advance payments.

As regards the course of trade of some other commodities, mustard oil was exported outside after meeting the district's demand. About 6,000 maunds of stick-lac produced annually at Khatra are all exported to Calcutta. Vegetables, besides being consumed locally also find their way out in substantial quantities to neighbouring industrial towns like Durgapur, Kharagpur, Asansol, Adra, Tata-

[1] loc. cit.
[2] loc. cit.

nagar, etc.[1] According to a report of the District Magistrate of Bankura, the produce of the silk industry of Vishnupur, the tobacco industry of Vishnupur and Sonamukhi, the cotton weaving industry of Bankura, the brass and bell-metal industry of Vishnupur and Rāmsāgar as also the products of small-scale industries organized at the initiative of the C. D. Blocks have a market throughout West Bengal and also, occasionally, in places outside the State.[2]

Trade centres

In a recent note on the important retail trade centres of the district, the Agricultural Marketing Officer of Bankura furnished the following list: Jhantipahari, Onda, Raipur, Mejia, Barjora, Khatra, Simlapal, Gangajalghati, Bankura, Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, Joypur, Patrasayer and Kotulpur.

There are numerous places in the district where fairs and *melās* are held. People gather there mostly on religious occasions but the opportunities are also availed of for transacting business in various kinds of local produce. The list below is of important *melā*-sites in the district, arranged according to subdivisions and police stations.

BANKURA (SADAR) SUBDIVISION

Police Station	*Melā* sites
Bānkurā	Ekteswar, Kenjākurā, Uriāmā, Kānkāṭā (in town), Daser Bāndh (in town), Bhagabānpur, Jāmbediā, Mānkānāli, Sunukpāhāri, Āchuri, Jagadallā, Bānshi, Kushṭiā, Purandarpur, Kālpāthar and Nārrā.
Barjorā	Pratāppur, Barjorā, Gourberā, Pākhannā, Krishnanagar, Jagannāthpur and Beliātore.
Chhātnā	Jirrā, Ārrā, Kāmārkuli, Jhānṭipāhāri. Chhātnā Rāj Durbār, Kulgerā, Mantemmeno, Chhātnā, Kāmārtenli and Susuniā.
Gangājalghāṭi	Barsāl, Phuljām, Keshiārā, Pirrabānı, Bhaktabāndh, Bhuifore and Tāljhiṭkā.
Indpur	Hāṭgrām, Barabāndhā, Dāngārāmpur, Puārā, Indpur, Āṭbhāichandi, Brajarājpur and Nelāboni.
Khātrā	Nandā, Dhanārangi, Bāmni, Deuli, Bhogrā, Bhojdā, Simlā, Khātrā, Meṭālā and Parkul.
Mejiā	Nāmo Mejiā, Pālerbāndh, Ardhagrām, Mejiā, Rāmchandrapur, Bhārā and Tegbariā.
Ondā	Maihā, Ālāṭi, Khāmārberiā, Tapoban, Santore, Hariharpur, Lodnā, Bholā, Nutangrām, Perorā, Asnāsol, Hāṭbāri, Dhannā, Rāidi, Chhoṭa-Kurpā, Gholkundā, Nandarbani, Bhulānpur, Kiābāṭi, Chhāgullā, Baharāmuri, Gopālpur, Chandrakonā, Krishnanagar, Kiābāri, Bahulārā, Ondā, Teliberiā, Rāmsāgar, Gorāsol, Nākāijuri, Agardā, Purusottampur, Jhāṭibani, Jaṭābāri, Jādabnagar and Jāmdaharā.
Rāipur	Maṭgodā and Bhagrā.
Rānibāndh	Baddi, Nārkoli, Gholkuri, Paresnāth, Simlā, Māhutpur, Rudra, Budhkhilā, Rānibāndh, Bānsdihā and Rāutārā.
Sāltorā	Behāri, Dhekiā, Pābrā and Tiluri.

[1] Source: District Agricultural Marketing Officer, Bankura.
[2] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

Police Station	*Melā* sites
Simlāpāl	Simlāpāl, Dubrājpur, Bhelāidihā, Bhutsahar and Nekrātapal.
Tāldāngrā	Sābrākon.
VISHNUPUR SUBDIVISION	
Indās	Behār, Kalāgrām, Gopālnagar, Shāshpur, Keneṭi Gurudhām Sevāsram, Shānpurā and Ābdulpur.
Joypur	Brajasol, Dakshinbār, Maynāpur, Hetiā, Baital, Kuchiākol, Kuchiākol-Mohanpur, Gokulnagar and Geliā.
Kotulpur	Bālithā, Napukur, Mirzāpur, Sāpurā, Kotulpur, Madanmohanpur, Chātrā and Sibar.
Pātrasāyer	Deulpārā, Nārāyanpur, Sālkhārā, Pātrasāyer, Krishnanagar, Dānnā, Maheshpur, Bālsi, Birsingha, Jāmkuri, Nārichā, Kushadwip and Sehāpur.
Sonāmukhi	Sonāmukhi town, Pānchāl, Nafardāngā, Rādhāmohanpur, Pālsarā, Rāmpur, Khaerbani, Dariāpur, Nārāyansundari and Dhansimlā.
Vishnupur	Chuāmasinā, Bharā, Dihar, Jantā, Rādhānagar, Ajodhyā, Dwārikā, Turki-Sitārāmpur, Pānsoli, Bāsudebpur, Jiābāndi, Piārdobā, Chānchar, Kellā (Vishnupur town) and Vishnupur town.

Co-operative marketing

The integrated scheme for starting large-sized co-operative marketing societies, initiated by the Agricultural Marketing Branch of the Agriculture Directorate, was transferred to the Department of Co-operation in 1958-59. Although little work has been done in the district under the above programme, another scheme for setting up small-sized co-operative marketing societies was successfully implemented in Bankura by the Agricultural Marketing Branch with financial assistance from the C.D. programme. Some of the more important societies falling under the latter category are : (*i*) the Jhilimili Kalyān Niketan Samabāy Pashupākhi Pālan Dugdha Utpādan O Bipanan Samiti Ltd., (*ii*) the Kotulpur Sarbārtha Samabāy Dugdha O Pashupākhi Unnayan Samiti Ltd., (*iii*) the Nanchā Ādivāsi Grāmmya Samabāy Samiti Ltd., (*iv*) the Banakul Krishi Samabāy Krishi Utpādan O Bipanan Samiti Ltd., (*v*) the Sāltorā Thānā Sarvodaya Samabāy Samiti Ltd., (*vi*) the Maheshpur Krishi Samabāy Samiti Ltd., (*vii*) the Jāmkuri Sarbārthasādhikā Samabāy Samiti Ltd., (*viii*) the Kushadwip Krishibrinda Samabāy Samiti Ltd., (*ix*) the Beluṭ-Rasulpur-Biur Unnayan Krishi Samabāy Bikray Samiti Ltd. and (*x*) the Piārdobā Ādivāsi Sarbakalyān Samabāy Samiti Ltd.[1]

State trading

State trading in rice and paddy was introduced throughout West Bengal from December 1, 1965. Without disturbing the ordinary trade channels in the non-rationed areas, Government intended thereby to procure sufficient stocks to meet its commitments in the statutory and modified rationed areas. Under this arrangement, the

[1] Source: District Agricultural Marketing Officer, Bankura.

marketable surplus of rice and paddy lying with all cultivators possessing more than 5 acres of irrigated land or 7 acres of non-irrigated land has to be sold to the State Government through any of the following agencies : (*a*) co-operative societies declared as Government agencies for procurement, (*b*) registered mills which can buy only at the mill-gate and (*c*) direct procurement agents appointed by the District Magistrates. The D.P. agents are usually selected from the trade but under the new arrangements they are authorized to buy on behalf of the Government only. The State Government has also fixed the prices for different grades of rice and paddy. The procurement centres are so dispersed that no producer has to travel for more than five miles to sell his produce. After procurement, the responsibility for transportation, storage, distribution etc. rests with the Government.

Trade and labour organizations: Organs for dissemination of trade news

Co-operative societies functioning in the silk, handloom, brass, bell-metal and various other industries of the district have already been adequately dealt with in the chapter on Industries (Chapter V) and need not be described here again.

Labour organizations are very few in the district; the two worth mentioning are the Bankura Zilla Motor Mazdoor Sangha and the Bankura District Biḍi Kārigar Union.

That the existing arrangements for the dissemination of trade news were utterly inadequate for the needs of the district has been stated earlier in this chapter. Under a scheme for the improvement of marketing intelligence, two centres were, however, opened at Bankura town and Jhantipahari during the Second Five Year Plan which collected relevant informations every day from the local markets and transmitted them through daily telegrams to the central compiling authorities in Calcutta. These agencies also prepared weekly, fortnightly and quarterly market reports. Weekly reviews of marketing conditions were also written by them in the regional language and widely circulated through the Block Development offices and Anchal Panchayats etc. for the information of the rural public. Much of the work, however, had to be suspended recently.

Weights and measures

The measures of weight commonly adopted in business till recently were the maund, the seer and the chhaṭāk. In the case of liquids, the local *pāi* measure in which 16 chhaṭāks made one *pāi* was in vogue. In measuring lengths, the yard, the cubit, the foot and the inch were customary units. But all this is past history now, as the metric system of weights and measures has since been enforced by law and the people of the district are gradually adapting themselves to these new standards.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATIONS

Old-time Trade Routes and Highways & Modes of Conveyance

In the Maurya era, a great highway is believed to have existed from the north-west frontier of India to the imperial capital at Pāṭaliputra. This was the route which Megasthenes seems to have followed to reach the court of Chandragupta Maurya. It is also generally supposed that an extension of this road from Pāṭaliputra reached Bengal and went up to the mouth of the Ganges where the large ancient port of Tāmralipti was situated. Since there is no evidence to prove that Megasthenes travelled further east from Pāṭaliputra (or 'Pālibothrā' according to him), any description of this part of the road cannot be found in references to the account of Megasthenes by later writers.

In the 5th century, Fa-Hien, the Buddhist scholar from China, followed by Hiuen Tsang two centuries later, travelled quite extensively to the east of Pataliputra, covering many portions of Bengal. I-Tsing, the next Chinese traveller, who is known to have reached Tamralipti in 673 A.D., has left a graphic account of his adventures in course of a journey from Tamralipti to Buddha Gayā, a distance of about 60 *yojanas* according to him. Apparently, he followed a short-cut route across the hilly tracts of Chotanagpur.[1] In this context, Oldham[2] comments: "We have reason to believe, having regard to the old Buddhist texts and other sources of information, that there had long been at least two routes across this hilly country. one leading from Benares and Gaya to the Midnapore district through the Hazaribagh and Manbhum districts, and the other through the Monghyr, Sontal Parganas, Birbhum and Bankura districts, *via* Deogarh-Baidyanath, Sarath and Vishnupur, followed by Hindu pilgrims to their sacred shrines of Benares, Gaya, Baidyanath and Jagarnath (Puri)." About the time when the earliest Portuguese travellers visited the area, "Afghan semi-independent military fief-holders were settled on the frontiers of the hilly country.[3] From one of such Afghan ruling houses in Bihar came the Emperor Sher Shah, who is credited with the construction of a great road from Sonārgāon, in eastern Bengal, to Rohtās. Oldham[4] writes: "It is not till we come

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[1] For an interesting account of his travels, see J. Takakusu's translation of I-Tsing's 'A record of the Buddhist religions as practised in India and Malay Archipelago'. Oxford, 1896.

[2] C. E. A. W. Oldham—'Routes, Old and New from Lower Bengal up the Country' in Bengal Past and Present; July-September 1924. p. 26.

[3] ibid. p. 22.

[4] ibid. p. 26.

to Van den Broucke's map drawn about the year 1660 and published in Francois Valentijn's 'Oud en nieuw Oost-Indien' that we find any roads marked. On this map the main road from Bihar to the east is shown as following the south bank of the Ganges. . . . At Suti the road bifurcated, one branch going to Murshidabad, and thence *via* Plassey and Agardvip to Burdwan, Midnapore and Cuttack." This road passed within a few miles of the present district of Bankura.

While it is not easy to reconstruct an accurate picture of the state of communications in this part of the country for lack of historically correct information, the movements of large armies in and through this region suggest that there were serviceable routes across the rugged Chotanagpur region. It has been mentioned in the chapter on History (Chapter II) that in the 13th century, Sultan Ghyasuddin extended his influence up to the banks of the Damodar, touching the borders of Vishnupur, his army reaching as far as Katasin or Kathasanga or Kistanagar of Rennell's Atlas, about 40 km. (25 miles) east-northeast of Vishnupur. It is also authentically known that the Mughal army under Mansingh encamped at points now within the Bankura district during its campaign of 1590. In 1742, the Mahrattas invaded Bengal through the hilly country to the west of Bankura. Again, in 1760, when Prince Ali Gauhar (later Emperor Shah Alam) advanced against Mir Jafar Khan, Siva Bhaṭṭa, one of the chief Mahratta supporters of the Emperor, occupied Vishnupur and waited there till he was joined by Ali Gauhar on the retreat. It was, however, not until 1763 that European troops had to undertake a major campaign in this region. The movement of the East India Company's forces through the "hill country" was to have an important bearing on the subsequent development of communications in this area. Referring back to Oldham[1] for a description of this campaign, we find the following passage: "About October 1763, during Major Adams' campaign against Qasim Ali, after the battle of Udhuanala, . . . Major Carnac was detached from the main army to proceed 'along the frontier', meaning the frontier of the hilly country overrun by the Marathas. . . . Captain Williams tells us (in his book Bengal Native Infantry, p. 24—Ed.) that Carnac . . . 'ordered all the Company's troops to proceed, by what is now called the New Road, and join the army under Major Adams at Sant' (Sawath, on the bank of the Durgauti) 'where they arrived about the end of December.'" This is the first occasion on which English troops explored a little-known but direct route to Upper India across the 'Chutia Nagpur' uplands from the Burdwan district to the south of what is now the district of Gaya and from there to the western border of the Shahabad district. Williams does not tell us the locality where

[1] ibid. p. 28.

the Major was campaigning [illegible] he had [illegible] marched "more than six days," meaning [illegible] [illegible] in the direction of Rāmgarh. If that be the case, [illegible] would have been somewhere in the Bankura-Chhatna region and [illegible] troops were to move on through Raghunāthpur, Chās, [illegible] and Hāzāribāgh along the line of the 'New Road'. As a matter of fact, vast tracts in this area were totally unfamiliar to the Europeans till Rennell's maps were published between 1764 and 1776. Even then, these maps, according to Francis Buchanan, contained many discrepancies so far as this particular region was concerned.[1]

The awakening of the East India Company to the economic and strategic importance of this region and the potentialities of development of communications there, led to a proposal being made late in the 18th century for constructing a road to Chunār across the Chota-nagpur hills and the Son river and the work was ultimately completed around 1785.

The following passages from Bengal Past and Present[2] are interesting: "We can find no map on which this road with its several stages is marked until the year 1828, when a book with the following title was published at the Asiatic Lithographic Company's Press, . . . Calcutta: 'Illustrations of the Roads throughout Bengal: One Hundred and Twelve Coloured Plates, Scale 12 Miles to an Inch.' In the 'First Series,' Plates I to XIII depict the line of the 'Road from Calcutta to Loodhiana *via* Benares and Delhi'. Plate I is a map of the road from 'Calcutta to Bissunpore'; Plate II, 'Bissunpore to Chass'; Plate III, 'Chass to Penarkone'; Plate IV, 'Penarkone to Baroon'; and so on. The plates are signed 'G. Herklots'. Besides the plates, . . . there is a list of 'Dak Stages', with the distances between each . . . and further very interesting details as to rivers crossed, bridges, branch roads, and rates of travelling by dak bearers. The semaphore towers[3] are unfortunately not marked. . . . But a careful examination of these plates discloses what a bold conception this 'New Road' of Hastings was, and what a new line it seems to have taken. . . ."

Writing in 1863, Gastrell[4] mentioned, besides the 'New Road', three other roads: "One to the north-west connects the civil station

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[1] *ibid.* p. 31.

[2] *ibid.* p. 34.

[3] L. S. S. O'Malley wrote in the old Bankura District Gazetteer: "Not far from the road (Military Grand Trunk Road) at Rāmsāgar, a few miles west of Bishnupur, and at Sāighātā, a short distance from Ondā, some lofty towers may still be seen. These are interesting relics of a scheme entertained by the Indian Government early in the nineteenth century (1820-30) for the construction of a series of towers, 100 feet high and at intervals of 8 miles, for semaphore signalling all the way from Calcutta to Bombay. In those days the word 'telegraph' was applied to the method of signalling by means of semaphore, and we therefore find these towers marked on old maps as telegraph stations." p. 121.

[4] J. E. Gastrell—Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah. Calcutta, 1863.

of [illegible] at Raneegunge. A second runs through [illegible] portion of the district between the rivers [illegible] from the same station *via* Soonamookhy and Kissennuggur to [illegible]. The third is part of the old Trunk Road. The fourth opens up the communication between this district and Midnapore, and thence on to Cuttack and Pooree, and strikes off from the last-mentioned road at Bishenpoor. Great numbers of pilgrims annually traverse this road (the section from Bankura to Vishnupur) on their way to the greatest and most sacred of all the Hindoo shrines 'Juggernath'. There is a branch road also from Soonamookhy connecting it with the railway station of Panneeghur." O'Malley[1], however, observed in 1908 that "most of the passenger traffic, as well as part of the cart traffic" on this pilgrim road had "been absorbed by the railway." The first and the fourth roads mentioned by Gastrell as also the Pilgrim Road (the last being actually a part of the New Road) find mention in O'Malley's Bankura District Gazetteer as part of the Raniganj-Midnapore Road[2] running for a total distance of 94.19 km. (58½ miles). In 1908, this was the only road in the district maintained from the "Provincial funds", i.e. "kept up by the District Board for the Public Works Department." Only 4.8 km. (3 miles) of it were metalled and there were no bridges over the Damodar, Dwarakeswar, Gandheswari and Berai. It was about this time that the New Road was split up into three sections, namely "part of the Bishnupur-Howrah road, part of the Rāniganj-Midnapore road and part of the Bānkurā-Raghunāthpur road." This division has been maintained ever since.

O'Malley also traced the more important District Board roads which radiated from Bankura and Vishnupur. "To the west of Bankura is a road 17 miles long known as the Bānkura-Raghunāthpur road. Two important roads branch off from this road, one running from Dalpur to Mohesnā (9 miles) on the south-west and thence to Puruliā, while another strikes north from Chhātnā to Susuniā and thence through Kustholiā to Mejiā (21 miles). On the south of Bānkurā there are two main roads; one, the Bānkurā-Khātrā road, running south-west through Indpur (6 miles) to Khātrā, 21½ miles from Bānkurā; while the other, the Bānkurā-Rāipur road, goes south-east to Tāldāngrā (15½ miles) and thence *viā* Simlāpāl (8½ miles) to Rāipur, which is situated 36½ miles from Bānkurā. To the north-east a long road known as the Bānkurā-Burdwan road, leads through Beliātore (12½ miles) to Sonāmukhi (25 miles) and thence through Krishnanagar to Burdwan; its length within the district is 41½ miles. This used to form part of the direct route between Bānkurā and Calcutta, a total distance of 85½ miles. From Bishnupur two important District Board roads branch off. The first, known as the

[1] op. cit. p. 121.
[2] ibid. p. 120.

Bishnupur-Pānāgarh road, runs due north through Sonāmukhi to Rāngāmetiā on the Damodar river and thence to Pānāgarh, its length in the district being 25 miles. The second, known as the Bishnupur-Howrah road, runs for 23 miles within the district; from Kotalpur a road branches off to Indās and thence to Rol, ultimately joining the Bankura-Burdwan road a little distance beyond the north-eastern boundary. The only other roads calling for separate notice are those in the north-west of the district, viz., a road from Gangājalghāti to Sāltorā, 13½ miles long, which passes through Kustholiā, where it crosses the Chhātnā-Mejiā road, and a road from Mejiā *viá* Sāltorā to Marulu (14½ miles), which is part of the Rāniganj-Puruliā road."[1] Many unbridged rivers flowing through the district posed a serious problem to internal communication since early times. "All the main roads," wrote Gastrell in 1863, "were once well metalled and bridged but were not in good repair at the time the Survey operations were going on. In several places the bridges had been cut off by the streams from the road, which, therefore, passed down into and through the water instead of over the bridge. The timber traffic from Pooroolia is said to have fallen off considerably since the bridges and roads were neglected."[2]

Prior to the introduction of the railways, road travels were not only expensive, but tedious as well. Here is an eloquent description of Hunter's journey from Suri to Midnapur in 1866 given by F. H. Skrine.[3] "The journey was fraught with fatigue and peril, and its incidents contrast strangely with the prosaic features of railway now universal throughout India. The Hunters journeyed by road in their own victoria drawn by a pair, their third horse being sent forward at alternate stages. August is the month least suited of the twelve for a flitting,[4] for it is a time of suffocating heat varied by downpours. . . . On arriving at the bank of the river Damodar the luckless travellers found it a raging torrent. The only means of transit was a crazy ferry-boat, into which was crammed the victoria flanked by the horses on either side. . . . Then a start was made. . . at 8 A.M. but it was past ten at night ere the boat was able to make a creek on the opposite bank. The horses were lifted through the sea of mud left by the receding waters by the help of bamboo leverage, and the family, now fairly worn out, made their way to the embanked high road and started for the rest house. The carriage had not proceeded far ere the driver saw a broad black line bisecting the road immediately in front. This proved to be a chasm made by the floods.

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[1] ibid. pp. 120-21.
[2] J. E. Gastrell—op. cit.
[3] F. H. Skrine—Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter. Calcutta, 1901. p. 118.
[4] "In the cold and hot weathers, the dried up river beds with wide stretches of sand did not offer any less serious obstacle to traffic; it was a pitiable sight to see the frantic struggles of the bullocks to drag their carts across them." (L.S.S. O'Malley—op. cit. p. 119.).

There was nothing for it but to unhitch the horses, let the carriage down the bank, and drag it painfully to the summit of the road on the other side of the gap."

Old-time modes of conveyance

Much of the early trade and traffic of the district (at least up to the 19th century) must have been carried on along the navigable water routes and the rest by means of pack animals and hired transport labourers. "The Damodar", writes A. Mitra,[1] "used to be navigable up to Mejia, and until the East Indian Railway was opened in 1855 (not traversing through the Bankura district) coal was carried away from the Raniganj collieries by boats; but no boats are to be seen now in any part of this district. Even the Dwarakeswar was navigable up to Bankura for part of the year until about 1880, although from the present condition of the river it is hard to imagine that this could have been so. The deterioration of the rivers has been partly due to the denudation of the forest land, but in the case of the Damodar, its navigability has been destroyed by the construction of embankments in Burdwan and other districts lower down." Thus, by the time steamboats were introduced, the rivers of Bankura had lost their navigability. O'Malley spoke of the rapid deterioration in the navigability of the Damodar river: "The only navigable rivers in the district are the Dāmodar and Kāsāi, but there is practically no river-borne traffic except timber, which is floated down the Dāmodar. During the rains numbers of logs are fastened together by ropes to form rafts known locally as *mārs*, with three or four men to steer them. The rafts are sometimes 50 to 60 yards long, and generally ten or twelve are launched together from the timber-yielding tracts higher up the river. The trade, however, is declining on account of the denudation of the forests towards the sources of the Dāmodar."[2]

In earlier times, primitive modes of conveyance, most of which have continued down to the present day, were in vogue. One of these was the individual carrying his burden on his back, shoulders, or head. Such transport by human beings came to form a regular commercial service. O'Malley wrote in 1908: "*pālkis* call for no special description. One conveyance is, however, peculiar, viz.. the ordinary *tumtum* or dogcart with bamboo shafts, the peculiarity being that, instead of a horse, there are two men in the shafts, who draw the vehicle along by pushing against a rope tied between them."[3] Apart from the usual pack animals—the horse, mule, ass, bullock or buffalo—the people of Bankura still remember the existence of a camel-cart service plying between Bankura town and Gangajalghati in the not very distant past. Springless bullock-carts have been the

[1] A. Mitra—Census 1951, West Bengal District Handbook: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953, p. xi.
[2] L. S. S. O'Malley—op. cit. p. 119.
[3] ibid. pp. 121-22.

most widely used road conveyance in the countryside since times immemorial.

ROAD TRANSPORT

The expansion of highway communication is perhaps the most significant post-independence development in the district. Today the district's road system consists of a network connecting the larger towns, with a close mesh within the urban areas to serve the various localities, and a wide reticulation in the country to serve the dispersed settlements, farms etc. This has led to a large increase in the volume of traffic and extension of transportation facilities to many localities unserved so far. It has also helped the upliftment of the sizable tribal population of the district. However, the alignments of some of these roads are unhelpful; others (excepting those constructed during the Plan periods) are not all-weather roads; some unfordable rivers are without viaducts; modern vehicles are scarce and the entire system of locomotion is still very slow, expensive and largely local in nature.

Lying in between the Durgapur industrial complex and the Hooghly conurbation to the north-east and south-east and the Jamshedpur industrial region to the west, the district occupies a significant position. The important Midnapur-Raniganj road had to be improved during the Second World War and in the geo-strategy of the district the part played by the Grand Trunk Road needs no elaboration. As there is no airport, maximum efficiency must be secured from arterial roads during an emergency. Nearly all old roads were the products of chance joining up of field tracks with very irregular and winding alignments. New roads, capable of taking modern high-speed motor traffic or heavy-tonnage lorries, had, therefore, to be built.[1] In spite of the excellent capacity of the Bankura soil to stand the ravages of regular vehicular traffic and the laterite formations providing the cheapest materials for road-surfacing in an area otherwise devoid of road metal, only spasmodic and unplanned efforts were put forth in the past for improving roads. The authority for construction of roads was transferred in 1854 from the Military Board to the Civil Department of Public Works. Highways, however, were regarded as only of local importance. The Provincial Government placed most of the road mileage in the Province under the care of the local bodies reserving direct responsibility for only a small fraction of it.

Jayakar Committee

In 1928, the Road Development Committee under the Chairmanship of M. R. Jayakar called for a change in the whole road policy of the Government. The Government of India responded by setting up in 1929 a Central Road Fund with the proceeds of a surcharge on petrol in order to enable them to make annual block grants to

Central Road Fund

[1] L. D. Stamp—Applied Geography. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1961. pp. 85-90.

provinces out of this Fund for subsidizing provincial works on roads.

The King Plan

When works under the Central Road Fund began, Bengal had no development plan worth the name. This lack of organization and planning accounted for an inadequate utilization of the C.R.F. which impelled the Government of Bengal to appoint in 1934 A. J. King as special officer for road development. King thoroughly investigated the conditions of road communications then obtaining in Bankura and other districts and took into consideration the necessity for making maximum use of the existing roads and providing others to act as feeders to them. His scheme avoided, as far as possible, selection of roads likely to compete with the railways. Four different classes of roads were envisaged which, on completion, were to provide an integrated and sufficient system of road communication. In Bankura, "the examination made and particulars recorded relate to 100 miles of road and 2,856 running feet of bridging, which includes 4 major bridges and 419 minor bridges and culverts. Particulars of the bridges on the existing railways in the district were also collected to help in the examination of the general drainage conditions and the study of the important question of obstruction to the same caused by the construction of raised embankments."[1] A classified list of roads in Bankura district (including Government and District Board roads but excluding subdivisional, urban and village roads) incorporated in King's report show that the total road mileage in the district in 1938 was 898.37 miles or 1,446.37 km. Of this, 94 km. (58.4 miles), i.e. the entire length of the Raniganj-Midnapur road, 20.93 out of 27.30 km. of the Bankura-Raghunathpur road (extending from Nutanchaṭi to Bāmansāsan), 21.53 out of 34.61 km. of the Vishnupur-Howrah road (extending from Vishnupur to Kotulpur), 1.78 out of 6.77 km. of the Ondāgrām railway station feeder road (extending from Onda to Chābrā), 3.22 out of 22.94 km. of the Dalpur-Sāltorā road, the entire lengths of the Jhānṭipāhāri feeder road (1.41 km.), Chhātnā feeder road (0.22 km.), Vishnupur feeder road (1.17 km.), Bheduāsol feeder road (0.14 km.), Sonāmukhi feeder road (0.83 km.), Brindābanpur feeder road (0.48 km.), Beliātore feeder road (0.33 km.) and Hāmirhāṭi feeder road (0.48 km.)—the total length aggregating to 147.55 km. or 91.65 miles—were metalled roads, bridged and drained throughout. Besides, there were 314.01 km. (195.04 miles) of partially bridged and drained metalled roads. The length of unmetalled roads was 984.64 km. (611.58 miles), out of which only 52.24 km. (32.45 miles) were bridged and drained. A census of traffic was also taken by King and the results obtained showed that the Raniganj-Midnapur road, Bankura-Indpur road, Vishnupur-Joypur road, Joypur-Kotulpur road, Bankura-Chhatna

[1] A. J. King—Comprehensive Report on Road Development Projects in Bengal, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1938. pp. 5-6.

road, Bankura-Taldangra road, Indpur-Khatra road, Bankura-Purulia road and Sonamukhi-Bankura road were the busiest. The load of vehicular motor traffic on all the roads was, however, very insignificant.

First road development plan for Bankura

The King Scheme contemplated the renovation or construction of 642.39 km. (399 miles) of roads in the district which included 296.24 km. (184 miles) of existing metalled road, 181.93 km. (113 miles) of existing unmetalled road and 164.22 km. (102 miles) of entirely new road. The scheme provided for one mile (1.61 km.) of road in respect of every 6.6 square miles (17.1 sq. km.) of area, or for every 2,786 persons in the district. On the assumption that a road or a railway is capable of tapping the country lying within 5 miles (8.05 km.) on either side of it, the then existing railways and the proposed roads, when taken together, were designed to serve 99.5 per cent of the total area of the district. It was decided that the Road Development Board would execute the construction of the roads listed in the scheme in the following order of priority.[1]

The Khāṭul-Bānsā road (PTR),[2] was to form a section of the Calcutta-Bombay Trunk Road, a feeder to the S.E. Railway at Vishnupur, while the whole length (99.82 km. or 62 miles) was designed to serve a large strip of country to the south of the Dwarakeswar river. It could also be used for linking Bankura with Burdwan. The Jāmdaharā-Mejiāghāṭ road (PTR), approximately 85 km. (53 miles) in length, was to provide the main north-south inter-district line of communication linking the Grand Trunk Road near Raniganj with Midnapur. The Dighalgrām-Tiluri road (DMR),[3] 115.9 km. (72 miles) long, was to form the main line of communication in the Damodar-Dwarakeswar interfluve, linking Purulia with Uchālon (in the Burdwan district). The Bankura-Kusthal road (DMR), 37 km. (23 miles) in length, was to serve as an important loop in the north-west and as a feeder to the S.E. Railway at Chhatna. The Goāldāngā-Pātākalā road (DMR), 27.37 km. (17 miles) long, was to serve as an extension of the Rāngāmeṭiā-Dhenkiā road as also as a link between Bankura town and the south-west of the district and generally serve its west-central portion. The Beliātore-Kristanagar road (DSR)[4] was to be a 16.1 km. (10 miles) extension of the Dighalgrām-Tiluri road to the north serving the Barjora thana and feeding the B.D.R. Railway. The Vishnupur-Rāngāmeṭiā road on the south bank of the Damodar (DSR), 45 km. (28 miles) in length and branching off from the Dighalgrām-Tiluri road, was to serve as a feeder to B.D.R. Railway. The Dwarakeswar, however, was to remain unbridged. The Masināpur-Dubrājhāṭi road (DSR), 35.4 km. (22 miles) in

[1] ibid. pp. 7-8.
[2] Provincial Trunk Road.
[3] District Main Road.
[4] District Secondary Road.

length, was to provide north-south communication in the extreme east and act as a feeder to the Khāṭul-Bānsā Trunk Road, the Dighalgrām-Tiluri District Main Road and B.D.R. Railway. The Simlāpāl-Joypur road (DMR), 49.9 km. (31 miles) in length, was to serve the south-central portion of the district and also as a feeder at Piārdobā to the S.E. Railway. The Kālāpāthar-Mandaldihā road (DMR), 37 km. (23 miles) in length, was to serve the southern corner of the district and link it with the last mentioned road. The Rāngāmeṭiā-Dhenkiā road (DMR), 45 km. (28 miles) long, was intended to serve the south-western corner of the district and connect the Khāṭul-Bānsā Trunk Road. The Birsinghapur-Rāipur road (DSR), 16.1 km. (10 miles) in length, was to form a direct route of communication between Simlāpāl and Rāipur. The Nabakishor-Nārāyanpur road (DSR), 12.9 km. (8 miles) in length, branching off from the Dighalgrām-Tiluri road, was to serve as a feeder to the B.D.R. Railway. Lastly, the Indpur-Pāyrāchāli road (DSR), 19.3 km. (12 miles) long, was to serve the south Dwarakeswar plains to the west.

The Second World War and strategic roads

The exigencies of the Second World War necessitated a quick recasting of the lines of communication to suit the needs of military operations. A number of strategic roads including the New Road was taken over by the army and others were quickly built by them for connecting military installations. Civil traffic was partially restricted on some sections of these roads. When after the cessation of hostilities the roads were handed back, it was found that while some had acquired improved surfaces, others were badly damaged due to heavy military traffic and their repair and maintenance posed a serious problem. The financial repercussions of the war also reacted unfavourably on the system of road communications in the country. Meanwhile, the Government of India had frozen the C.R.F. in 1941-42 to such an extent that no new project could be sanctioned during the pendency of the war.

The Nagpur Conference

The road problem at this stage had become so acute that in December 1943, the Government of India convened a conference at Nagpur of the Chief Engineers of all the Provinces to consider the ways and means for evolving a planned and co-ordinated road policy to meet the requirements of the entire sub-continent. The plan worked out by the conference envisaged the construction of various categories of roads graded according to the nature of the needs they were required to meet—national, provincial or merely local. The National Highways were designed to provide uninterrupted road communication from one part of the country to another. No such highway, however, passes through Bankura To provide the main arteries of trade and commerce, there were to be Provincial or State Highways, joining the district headquarters and other important places to the National Highways. The local roads were to be

of two categories, namely the District Roads (further classified into 'major' and 'other') and the Village Roads, the former so branching off from the National or State Highways as to be within 3.22 to 8.05 km.'s (2 to 5 miles') reach of every village, according to their high or low population density. The village roads were to be the outer links of this network, connecting all types of village settlements with each other and with the highways and serving as feeder roads to local rail and river traffic. This classification of roads has now been accepted as the standard all over India. The only improvement registered by it over the King Scheme was in the provision of the village roads. Unlike the King Scheme, however, the Nagpur Plan considered the railways to be complementary to the highways and took no account of possible rail-road competition that might develop in the future.

Revision of the King Report in the light of the Nagpur Plan

The King Report was modified district by district in the light of the recommendations of the Nagpur conference by a special officer for road development after the whole issue had been thrashed out at Commissioners' conferences in each Division where District Officers and representatives of the District Boards were present. The Government thus finalized a plan in 1946 which envisaged the construction and improvement of roads for a period of 20 years beginning from 1946-47. The phasing pattern following a schedule of priorities was also modified by a District Development Committee because of the partition of the Province. The basis and distribution of the pre-partition plan, however, remained much the same in Bankura which was geographically unaffected by the partition.

The revised plan provided for the following lengths of different categories of roads in Bankura district. (The corresponding lengths for West Bengal are shown alongside).

	Bankura		West Bengal	
	Kilometres	Miles	Kilometres	Miles
National Highways	—	—	953.1	592
Provincial Highways	260.8	162	1,717.9	1,067
Major District Roads	351.0	218	4,754.3	2,953
Other District Roads	209.3	130	4,540.2	2,820
Village Roads	966.0	600	9,416.9	5,849
TOTAL	1,787.1	1,110	21,382.4	13,281

Work on the revised plan commenced in 1948 and after it had been in progress for two years, the whole scheme was reviewed by the Planning Commission and the following specifications[1] were

[1] Government of West Bengal, Development (Roads) Department: Five Year Road Development Programme, 1951-56. Calcutta, 1954.

laid down according to which roads are being constructed in this district (as also in other districts of West Bengal) since 1951.

National and State Highways: A road in this category is to have a metalled crust 3.66 metres (12 ft.) wide, with water-bound consolidated surface dressed with bitumen, 2.54 to 5.08 cm. (1" to 2") premixed carpet, or 10.2 cm. (4") cement concrete according to the nature and intensity of local traffic. The width of the embankment is to be 9.75 metres (32 ft.). Curves and crossings are to be designed for an average speed of 64 to 80 km. (40 to 50 miles) per hour outside urban limits. Sufficient roadside lands are to be kept on either side for future widening.

District Roads: These roads are to have the same type of metalled crust as in the case of the State Highways but the width of the embankment is to be 7.32 metres (24 ft.) only.

Village Roads: These are to be kutcha roads mostly with 4.87 metres (16 ft.) embankment. (Some of them are being provided with cement concrete or brick track-ways). They are also to be provided with improved culverts and waterways and are to serve as fair-weather roads.

District Roads

The Gangajalghati-Saltora road (22.5 km. or 14 miles), the Durgapur-Beliatore road (19.3 km. or 12 miles) with a new bridge over the Sali river near Beliatore, the roads linking Vishnupur, Sonamukhi and Rangametia (38.64 km. or 24 miles) with two new bridges over the Berāi and the Berāi *Khāl*, the Raniganj-Midnapur road (94.2 km. or 58.5 miles), the Bankura-Khatra road *via* Taldangra (37 km. or 23 miles), the Bankura-Purulia road *via* Mahesnāth (14.8 km. or 9.2 miles) and the Raniganj-Raghunathpur road *via* Mejia (23.7 km. or 14.75 miles) had been improved by 1951.[1]

During the First Plan, 257.6 km. (160 miles) of highways within the district were macadamized or otherwise improved. This included the Bankura-Ranibandh road (56.3 km. or 35 miles), Bankura-Taldangra link road (22.5 km. or 14 miles) with a bridge over the Dwarakeswar near Bankura, the Taldangra-Simlapal road (16.1 km. or 10 miles) with a vented causeway over the Jaypāndā, the Taldangra-Bānsā road (37 km. or 23 miles), the Bankura-Taldangra road (6.4 km. or 4 miles) linking with the Raniganj-Midnapur road, Bankura-Indas road (64.4 km. or 40 miles), the Simlapal-Sārengā-Bāmundighāt road (32.2 km. or 20 miles) with a vented causeway over the Silabati near Simlapal and the Ranibandh-Bānspāhāri road (22.5 km. or 14 miles). All these roads are metalled with a width varying from 3.04 to 3.66 metres (10 to 12 feet). During the Second Plan, 177 km. (110 miles) of roads were metalled or otherwise improved. This included the Simlapal-Khatra-Ambikānagar road (35.4 km. or 22 miles) with a reinforced concrete bridge

[1] A. Mitra—op. cit. pp. 158-59.

over the river Berāi, the Rāngāmāṭi-Āshuni-Dejuri road (17.7 km. or 11 miles), the Vishnupur-Patrasayer road (32.2 km. or 20 miles) with two bridges over the Kuper *Khāl* and Harinmuri *Khāl*, the Vishnupur-Sonamukhi-Rāngāmāṭi road (38.6 km. or 24 miles) with bridges over the Berāi river and Berāi *Khāl*, Rasulpur-Indas road (11.2 km. or 7 miles), the Rasulpur-Khandaghosh-Sagrai road (6.4 km. or 4 miles), the Krishnapur-Rāipur-Maṭgodā road (16.1 km. or 10 miles), and the Barjorā-Māliārā-Durlavpur road (19.3 km. or 12 miles) with a box-type bridge over the river Jore near Māliārā—all of them having a metalled width of 2.44 metres (8 feet) or more and negotiable throughout the year. The latest available figures[1] indicate that only 32.2 km. (20 miles) of roads have been constructed during the Third Plan (up to February 1966), namely the Supur-Deolegarh road (9.6 km. or 6 miles), the by-pass connecting the Raniganj-Midnapur road with the Bankura-Beliatore road (3.2 km. or 2 miles) with a bridge over the Gandheswari river near Bankura and the Saltora-Mejia road (19.3 km. or 12 miles).

Village roads

In 1951 there were 802 village roads in the Sadar and 181 in the Vishnupur subdivision of the district.[2] If it is permissible to extend the term 'road' to include rural tracks and footpaths then the district has had a road system ever since man had occupied it. It is not a mere coincidence that in Bankura early civilization penetrated only where transportation was relatively easy, namely along the courses of the rivers and did not extend to the inaccessible forest-covered tracts. Village roads have always been a pressing necessity in the district and this much-neglected rural amenity is likely to be provided, at least to some extent, during the Fourth Plan, which visualizes construction of about 180 km. (112 miles) of rural roads. "From the point of view of regional planning the completion of this road grid would be undoubtedly helpful in promoting agro-based industries, sustaining regional markets, monetizing agricultural sector and, above all, in dispersing small and medium-sized industries in the countryside. This road network would also help in achieving a more balanced spatial distribution of population and economic activities."[3]

Vehicles and conveyances: Beasts of burden, bullock-carts, cycles, automobiles etc.—their number and importance

The origin and destination of traffic within the district is scattered and involves numerous movements over short distances, as is to be expected in a subsistence economy. The bullock-cart is still indispensable and constitutes, by and large, the most popular conveyance in the countryside. When lightly and strongly built, it is a very tough and all-purpose vehicle capable of taking amazingly

[1] Source: Executive Engineer, Bankura Construction Division.

[2] A. Mitra—op. cit. pp. 156-57. In 1961 the district had 112 village roads and 72 District Board roads (1961 Census Handbook : Bankura, pp. 355-57).

[3] C. M. P. O.—Regional Planning for West Bengal. Calcutta, 1965. pp. 57-58.

rough handling on the difficult unmetalled tracks in the countryside. Its narrow iron tyres, however, damage all but the best concrete roads. It is seldom possible to provide roughly paved sideways for the carts nor can the drivers be confined to such sideways when these are provided. One solution of this problem lies in the use of rubber tyres. But their high cost places them beyond the reach of most cart drivers. This solution would not, therefore, work at least in the immediate future. On an average, each police station in Bankura has five to six thousand bullock carts. But in spite of their numbers they are being eliminated from hauls of over 40 km. (25 miles), at least in areas with decent roads.[1] For medium distances the cycle and for longer distances the automobile are increasingly becoming serious competitors of bullock-carts and railways respectively for both passenger and goods traffic. "This in itself raises problems since bus and lorry working is mainly in the hands of small owners whose notions of management often exclude depreciation or even accounts, but give ample scope to virulent rate-cutting, gross over-working of popular routes, and even grosser overloading."[2] Though the cycle has become a very important and widely used means of transport in the towns, its use in the rural areas is still restricted among the more well-to-do sections of the people. It appears from a recent report of the Sadar Circle Officer, Bankura that automobiles are even now "a matter of curiosity in the interior villages." However, in conformity with the increasing outlay on road development, there has been a significant rise, in the registration of motor vehicles in the district. The table below gives comparative figures for 1956 and 1964.

Date	No. of registered goods automobiles	No. of registered passenger automobiles
March 31, 1956	430	183
March 31, 1964	870	379
Percentage increase	102.32	107.10

"The implication of the trend shown is obvious. There is a positive cause and effect relationship between road development and increase in motor vehicles. Gradual ramification of economic activities and opening up of new areas, as a result of road construction, will increase the opportunities for road transportation, which will bring on roads an increasing number of vehicles, which, in turn, will demand improved road facilities."[3]

[1] P. F. Antia—'Transport' in the Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs, No. 34, 1946. pp. 17-20.
[2] O. H. K. Spate—India and Pakistan. London, 1957. p. 318.
[3] Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization—Regional Planning for West Bengal—A statement of needs, prospects and strategy. p. 55.

Public transport: privately owned bus and taxi services, State and municipal transport services

Public transport facilities have increased steadily from year to year, especially since independence. In 1947 there were only 21 bus routes in the district, all privately owned, covering a total distance of about 1,186 km. (737 miles). In 1966 the corresponding figures were 55 and 3,413.2 km. (2,120 miles). The following statement prepared from the latest (April 1966) information gives details of the bus services operating in the district.

Sl. No.	Description of route	Distance km.	Distance miles	No. of buses	No. of trips per day
1.	Bankura-Mejia *via* Gangajalghati	44	27	4	4
2.	Bankura-Bākuliā *via* Gangajalghati & Mejia	63	39	1	1
3.	Bankura-Madhukundā *via* Gangajalghati, Mejia & Tiluri	76	47	2	2
4.	Bankura-Saltora *via* Gangajalghati & Kusthal	48	30	1	1
5.	Bankura-Purulia *via* Raghunathpur	116	72	2	2
6.	Bankura-Purulia *via* Hurā	84	52	1	1
7.	Bankura-Mānbāzār *via* Indpur & Maliān	48	30	1	2
8.	Bankura-Mejia *via* Chhatna, Saltora & Tentulṭukri	64	40	1	1
9.	Bankura-Disergarghāṭ *via* Chhatna, Saltora & Tiluri	85	53	3	3
10.	Bankura-Tiluri *via* Chhatna & Saltora	53	33	1	1
11.	Bankura-Mejia *via* Chhatna, Saltora, Kusthal & Gangajalghati	84	52	1	1
12.	Bankura-Kāshipur *via* Ārrāh	58	36	1	1
13.	Bankura-Hāṭgrām *via* Chhatna & Dalpur	42	26	1	2
14.	Bankura-Kenjākurā extended up to Maliān	48	30	2	4
15.	Bankura-Gorābāri *via* Indpur & Khatra	55	34	3	5
16.	Bankura-Dhanārā *via* Indpur, Khatra & Kechāndāghāṭ	61	38	1	2
17.	Bankura-Jhilimili *via* Indpur, Khatra & Ranibandh (direct route)	84	52	2	2
18.	Bankura-Jhilimili *via* Indpur & Maliān (diverted route)	105	65	1	1
19.	Bankura-Phulkusmā *via* Indpur, Khatra, Kechāndāghāṭ, Raipur & Maṭgodā	90	56	1	1

Sl. No.	Description of route	Distance km.	Distance miles	No. of buses	No. of trips per day
20.	Bankura-Mashiārā extended up to Simlabandh *via* Indpur & Khatra	60	37	1	2
21.	Bankura-Kānkrādānrā *via* Indpur & Khatra	55	34	1	1
22.	Gopālpur-Khatra *via* Mashiārā, Maliān & Supur	29	18	1	1
23.	Bankura-Gopālpur *via* Indpur & Maliān	40	25	1	2
24.	Bankura-Sārengā *via* Indpur, Khatra & Gopālpur	71	44	1	1
25.	Bankura-Jorisā *via* Indpur, Khatra & Lakshmisāgar	64	40	2	2
26.	Bankura-Raipur *via* Taldangra, Simlapal & Pirrārgari	58	36	4	4
27.	Bankura-Brāhmandihi *via* Taldangra, Simlapal, Pirrārgari & Sārengā	69	43	1	1
28.	Bankura-Fulberiāghāṭ *via* Taldangra, Simlapal, Pirrārgari & Sārengā	79	49	1	1
29.	Bankura-Lakshmisāgar *via* Ratanpur, Bibardāh & Hārmāsrā	42	26	3	3
30.	Bankura-Bhutsahar *via* Taldangra & Simlapal	55	34	1	1
31.	Bankura-Vishnupur *via* Onda & Rāmsāgar	32	20	5	6
32.	Bankura-Vishnupur *via* Onda, Taldangra, Pānchmurā & Piārdobā	81	50	1	1
33.	Bankura-Vishnupur *via* Onda, Taldangra & Pānchmurā	64	40	1	1
34.	Bankura-Kāmārpukur *via* Onda, Vishnupur, Kotulpur & Joyrāmbaṭi	79	49	1	1
35.	Vishnupur-Joyrāmbaṭi *via* Bānkādaha & Baital	48	30	2	2
36.	Vishnupur-Kālipur *via* Joyrāmbāṭi	64	40	1	2
37.	Vishnupur-Kālipur *via* Khāṭul	55	34	2	4
38.	Vishnupur-Kālipur *via* Tājpur	60	37	2	2
39.	Vishnupur-Joyrāmbāṭi *via* Kotulpur	42	26	4	1
40.	Vishnupur-Joyrāmbāṭi *via* Maynāpur & Lego	58	36	1	1
41.	Vishnupur-Lāugrām *via* Joypur & Kotulpur	44	27	1	1

Sl. No.	Description of route	Distance km.	Distance miles	No. of buses	No. of trips per day
42.	Vishnupur-Lego *via* Maynāpur	29	18	1	2
43.	Bankura-Patrasayer extended up to Bālsi *via* Beliātore & Sonamukhi	68	42	1	2
44.	Bankura-Patrasayer extended up to Rasulpur *via* Beliatore & Sonamukhi	69	43	1	2
45.	Bankura-Rāngāmeṭiāghāṭ *via* Beliatore & Barjora	48	30	1	1
46.	Bankura-Rāngāmeṭiāghāṭ *via* Desuriā & Fulberiā	73	45	1	1
47.	Bankura-Jagannathpur *via* Fulberiā & Desuriā	48	30	1	1
48.	Bankura-Durgapur Rly. Stn. *via* Beliatore	44	27	10	17
49.	Bankura-Durgapur Rly. Stn. *via* Desuriā & Fulberiā	63	39	1	1
50.	Bankura-Durgapur Rly. Stn. *via* Gangajalghati, Durlavpur, Māliārā & Barjora	74	46	2	4
51.	Tiluri-Durgapur Rly. Stn. *via* Saltora, Mejia & Māliārā	64	40	1	1
52.	Pānchāl-Durgapur Rly. Stn. *via* Beliātore	32	20	1	2
53.	Khatra-Balarāmpur *via* Jhilimili	98	61	1	1
54.	Sonamukhi-Durgapur Rly. Stn. *via* Rāngāmeṭiā & Hāṭ-āsuriā	42	26	1	1
55.	Bankura-Beluṭ extended up to Purulia	106	66	1	1

The opening of a road across the Durgapur barrage connecting Bankura district with Burdwan and the Grand Trunk Road, the rapid industrialization of the Durgapur belt, faster and better facilities of travel offered by the South Eastern Railway and seasonal movements of agricultural labourers to the eastern districts *via* Durgapur are some of the factors contributing to the rapid rise in the volume of vehicular traffic, especially along the Bankura-Durgapur route. The routes on which State buses ply in the district include those linking up Durgapur, Beliatore, Bankura, Onda, Vishnupur, Kotulpur, Joyrambati, Kamarpukur, Arambagh etc. The tariff rates of State buses are slightly higher than those of private ones. There were only three licensed taxis in the district in 1963. Their hire-charges were usually bargained between the parties. Cycle-rickshaws are plentiful in the towns and may also be seen in

prosperous villages. None of the three municipalities in the district runs any transport service of its own.

RAILROADS

Historical role in the socio-economic life of the district

It took about half a century—from 1853 to 1900—for the Indian railways to reach Bankura district. Since 1900 in-filling developments were taking place (for the main outlines of the Indian railway system had been completed by the 19th century) and of these the share falling to Bankura was one of the earliest. The construction and maintenance of the district's railways must have been fairly costly owing to innumerable culverts and many bridges spanning streams often liable to sudden and torrential floods. In many cases, e.g. in the Dwarakeswar plains, the building of railways athwart the natural lines of drainage has aggravated the problems of flooding. All the railway lines in the district, again, are single-track which obviously impedes smooth transport and increases congestion.[1] The railroads in Bankura were built chiefly for their economic importance, the military or political reasons being only of secondary consequence. Exploitation of natural resources, namely timber, coal and other mineral ores etc. so over-shadowed the other factors that only indirect routes providing intra-regional movement to Kharagpur, Asansol and Purulia were laid out. That the system was not initially intended to serve the less profitable commercial areas of the district or even to sustain the regional markets is apparent from the fact that, in recent years, such pockets had to be linked with the railways by feeder roads. Moreover, the policy followed then was that the railroads did not face any competition from the highways.[2]

Besides the usual goods traffic, the district is served by three passenger trains each day on the Bankura Damodar River Railway and four on the South Eastern Railway, namely those plying between Kharagpur-Asansol, Howrah-Gomoh, Puri-Asansol and Howrah-Chakradharpur.

South Eastern Railway

The Kharagpur-Purulia section of the South Eastern Railway (previously, the Howrah-Ādrā-Gomoh section of the Bengal Nagpur Railway) was inaugurated in 1900 A.D. It connects Piārdobā, the southernmost station within the district, with Āmdihā near Rāngāmāti on the district's north-western border defined by the Ādall Nadi. Other important stations on this section are Vishnupur, Ramsagar, Ondagram, Bheduāsol, Bankura, Chhatna, Jhantipahari and Āmdihā. It is a broad-guage (1.68 meters or 5'6") section and, so far as goods traffic is concerned, is one of the most important sections of the S. E. Railway. The approximate length of this strip is 75 km. or 47 miles.

Passenger and goods traffic

In 1936, there were 8 stations on this track within the district. In the same year it carried 6,78,096 passengers and 1,29,071.6 tonnes

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[1] O. H. K. Spate—op. cit. pp. 315-16.

[2] For the interesting history of the development of Indian railways see N. Sanyal—Development of Indian Railways. Calcutta, 1930.

of goods, the gross receipts being Rs. 11,87,000. The corresponding figures (the latest available in respect of important stations only) for 1959 are given below:

Stations (selected)	Goods				Passengers	
	Outward (Quintals)	Earnings (Rs.)	Inward (Quintals)	Earnings (Rs.)	Number	Earnings (Rs.)
Vishnupur	30,592.7	32,152	2,29,475.0	2,86,426	2,02,388	2,93,618
Bankura	56,189.7	81,571	8,05,941.4	14,99,885	4,31,041	7,05,547
Ondagram	54,655.9	55,799	20,534.6	27,263	1,22,645	66,565
Jhantipahari	44,097.3	31,435	41,881.3	68,411	57,893	42,937
Bagri Road	—	—	—	—	11,758	8,598
Piardoba	58,908.9	92,037	—	—	45,539	32,648
Ramsagar	—	—	27.6	67	36,635	23,880
Bheduasol	—	—	—	—	41,436	17,236
Chhatna	26,011.3	16,981	28,716.2	—	61,124	50,989

The principal outgoing goods are fire-wood, timber and rice (from Vishnupur); mustard-oil, dry chillies, husk, grains and pulses (from Bankura); grains, pulses, hide and skin (from Ondagram); straw, ballast and rice (from Jhantipahari); *sāl*-leaf, timber, bamboo, fire-wood, paddy, rice and hide (from Piardoba) and ballast, stone-chips, rice, cement, coal, straw, bone and *biḍi*-leaf (from Chhatna). The principal incoming articles are *biḍi*-leaf, ballast, mollasses, grains, pulses and seeds (to Vishnupur); onion, iron and steel, corrugated iron sheets, cement, tar, molasses, *biḍi*-leaf, straw and potato (to Bankura); flour, stone-chips and oil-cake (to Ondagram); coal, timber, cement, grains and pulses (to Jhantipahari); iron and steel (to Peardoba) and cement and coal (to Chhatna). The exports and imports come from and go to such important places as Garden Reach, Kidderpore Docks, Budge Budge, Rāmkriṣṭapur, Shālimār, Ṭāṭānagar, Delhi, Cochin, Rourkelā, Kānpur, Mirzāpur, Cuttack, Rānchi, Rāniganj and Mohudā.

Bankura Damodar River Railway

The B. D. R. Railway has three sections, one from Bankura to Indas, the other from Indas to Sehārābāzār and the third (in Hooghly district) from Sehārābāzār to Rāynagar; the approximate distances being 68.14 km., 188.7 km. and 9.57 km. respectively. The first section was opened in 1916 and the other two in 1917 under the private management of Messrs. McLloyd and Company Ltd. The subscribed share-capital of the B. D. R. Railway was Rs. 34 lakhs. An arrangement between the Company and the Government of India stipulates that if the net receipts of the Company exceed the minimum amount sufficient to pay interest on the paid-up share capital at the

rate of 5% per annum in any year, such excess should be divided equally between the Central Government and the Company. If the net receipts are not sufficient to pay interest on the paid-up share capital at the rate of 3½% per annum, the Central Government should pay (in addition to the net receipts of the Company) such sum as to make up the shortfall. The required land was provided by the Government of India free of charge under the usual branch-line terms, the proprietary right to it remaining with the Central Government.

Alignment and important stations

Whereas the broad-gauge section from Kharagpur to Adra runs in a north-westerly direction, the alignment of the B. D. R. Railway is in a north-easterly direction for the first 32.2 km. (20 miles) parallel to and about 1.6 km. (1 mile) away from the Bankura-Burdwan road. It then proceeds to Sonamukhi and Patrasayer at distances of 40.2 km. (25 miles) and 56.3 km. (35 miles) respectively. The important stations on this railway are Bankura, Biknā, Nobāndā, Belboni, Beliātore, Brindābanpur, Hāmirhāṭi, Sonāmukhi, Dhansimlā, Dhagariā, Pātrasāyer, Betur, Kumrul, Indās, Shānkrul and Shāspur Road. The line traverses the trans-Damodar area; the first half of the section from Bankura abounds in evergreen *sāl*-jungles standing on the rolling plains of reddish laterite soil while the second half passes through innumerable paddy fields of the Damodar basin. It serves, obviously, as a feeder line to the South Eastern Railway, the junction being at Bankura.

Services rendered

In 1932-33 the B. D. R. Railway carried 1,72,298 passengers and 27,133 tons of goods earning Rs. 90,361 and Rs. 57,826 respectively. The corresponding figures for 1963-64 were 9,68,453 passengers and 33,800 tons of goods and earnings of Rs. 6,87,971 and Rs. 2,20,611 respectively. Paddy, grown in the area served by this railway, forms the principal item of its goods traffic. With the advent of this railway, rice mills have sprung up at Bankura town, Beliatore, Patrasayer, Indas, Shāspur and Sehārābāzār. The quantum of goods carried, however, has not increased as much as that of passengers due to a serious rail-road competition. Even then, the role of the B. D. R. Railway has been one of vital importance in the growth of the economy of this region. A bridge over the Damodar at Sadarghāṭ, Burdwan is a long-felt need which could connect this railway with the Burdwan-Kāṭwā and Āhmedpur-Kāṭwā Railways of Burdwan and Birbhum.

Rail-road competition

It appears from a report based on statistics for the year 1959, that the railway mileage in the district affected by rail-road competition was 104. The number of prospective passengers over this stretch was calculated at 4,08,800 which meant a revenue loss of Rs. 1,78,408 to the railways. Corresponding figures for goods traffic are not available.

It might be of interest to note that because of the detour through

Kharagpur, the South Eastern Railway has not been able to maintain a short direct link between Calcutta and Bankura district. Plans were said to have been afoot in 1912[1] to lay a direct railway track between Bankura and Sāntragāchhi. But this scheme was not pursued. Another possible link, which has considerable popular support, is to connect Tārakeswar with Vishnupur *via* Ārāmbāgh.

WATERWAYS

Mention has already been made in an earlier section as well as in Chapter I of the decaying rivers and the abandoned waterways of the district. The main waterways are the Damodar, the Sali, the Dwarakeswar, the Jaypanda, the Silabati and the Kangsabati—all of which, because of their seasonal and non-perennial character, are usable only during the rains and autumn.

Bridges

There are 16 road-bridges (including 4 masonry causeways) in Bankura. Besides, the damming of the Kangsabati and Kumari will provide an all-weather road running along the top of the dam from Mukutmanipur in the north to Lipidiri in the south. On the Damodar there are two bridges, one over the Durgapur barrage and the other near Mejia on Bankura-Raniganj road. Old maps indicate the existence of ferry services at these two important bridge-points. The Sali has been bridged at three points, the first at Montārā along Raniganj-Midnapur road, the second at Beliatore along Bankura-Durgapur road and the third at Maheshpur on Sonamukhi-Rangametia road. On the Gandheswari near Bankura, there are a masonry causeway and a viaduct along the Raniganj-Midnapur road. The latter, because of the detour involved to negotiate it, is less used than the former. The Dwarakeswar has two bridges across it, one near Rājagram along Bankura-Khatra road and the other near Ekteswar along Bankura-Raipur road. There are two bridge-points on the Berāi, one at Sheorāghāṭi along Bankura-Raipur road and the other at Ramsagar on Raniganj-Midnapur road. The Jaypanda has been bridged at Pāhārpur on Bankura-Khatra road. There is also a masonry causeway on the Jaypanda near Taldangra. The Baharāmuri-Gobindapur ferry point on the Silabati along Bankura-Khatra road has since been bridged. The Bankura-Raipur road commands a masonry causeway on the Silabati. Of the numerous ferry points on the Kangsabati, only one at Gorābāri (near the Kangsabati dam site) has been improved to provide a masonry causeway on Raipur-Mānbāzār (in Purulia) road. Besides these, the S. E. Railway has eleven and the B. D. R. Railway seven bridges. Of these, the most important is across the Dwarakeswar near Bankura. Twelve out of the eighteen railway bridges in the district are within the Damodar-Dwarakeswar interfluve, and the rest in the region south of the Dwarakeswar.

[1] Sudhir Kumar Mitra—*Hooghly Jelār Itihās O Banga Samāj*, Vol. I (2nd Edn.). Calcutta, 1962. pp. 325-26.

Ferries

In the old Bankura District Gazetteer, O'Malley gave the following account about river ferries: "The District Board maintains 18 ferries, of which the most important is that across the Dāmodar at Rāngāmetiā. Most of the ferries ply only during the rains when the rivers and streams are in flood, the passengers and goods being transported in ordinary country boats and dug-outs. Floats resting on inverted earthern pots, and rafts made of sola pith, are used for crossing the smaller streams, and the latter are also used by fishermen to stand on when throwing their nets."[1] Many of the ferry points shown in maps are now fordable or have been bridged. The King Report of 1938 had mentioned only seven ferry services in the district. However, where ferry facilities exist, they usually consist of small country boats capable of transhipping people or, at best, bullock carts. The number of ferries existing today are one on the Jaypanda at Simlapal, three on the Kangsabati at Chiltore, Siulighāṭ and Kechandāghāṭ, five across the Dwarakeswar at Dalpur, Topoban, Chhilimpur, Dharāpāṭ and Syāmpārā, one on the Damodar at Rāngāmeṭiāghāt and one each on the Jaypāndā Khāl, Jasodā Khāl, Berāi Khāl and Penro Khāl.

OTHER MEANS OF TRANSPORT

Aerodromes, ropeways

There is no aerodrome in the district except a small air-strip at Piārdobā which lies between the Pānāgarh and Kalāikundā air bases. In order to facilitate the work on the Kangsabati project, a bi-cable aerial ropeway, 4.8 km. (3 miles) in length, connecting the Dhagarā quarry site with the left bank of the Kangsabati river has been in operation since November 14, 1959. It was constructed with Czechoslovak assistance at a cost of about Rs. 7,50,000. At present it is carrying only stone-chips and boulders. After the completion of the dam the ropeway is expected to serve in some other way.

TRAVEL AND TOURIST FACILITIES

A traveller in Bankura district, with myriad attractions competing for his attention, would not perhaps derive proper recompense for his labours in having his programme made up for him by a travel agency. Nor would it be easy for him to work out a satisfactory itinerary himself. The West Bengal Tourist Bureau has so far (May 1966) produced no publicity literature on places of interest in the district except a two-page 'folder' describing with pictures Vishnupur and Jayrāmbāṭi alone. The magnificent 12th century brick temple at Bahulārā (off Ondāgrām railway station), which archaeologists are unanimous in considering as one of the finest of its kind in India, the excellence of the numerous temples as also of the school of classical music at Vishnupur, the high artistry of the clay-modellers of Pānchmurā, the imposing grandeur of the mighty Kangsabati Dam and reservoir and the picturesque quiet of the

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 122.

Mukuṭmanipur Rest House perched on a hillock in the vicinity, the beauty of the extensive *sāl* and *palās* forests covering vast undulating tracts in Ranibandh police station, the rich folk culture of the tribals living in the western parts of the district—to mention only a few of the varied attractions—still await good publicity. Bankura, because of its variety of charm, would captivate those who refuse to take shepherded holidays or to have their tours laid and 'packaged' beforehand. To those who want to go places only, Chapter XVI of this volume will be informative; some 50 places of interest in the district have been adequately described there. Bankura is a veritable treasure-house also for those who like to combine with their travels some hobby-interest like photography, study of natural history or of changing cultural patterns, especially in the remoter areas.

The best time to visit the district is between autumn and spring. Winter is occasionally severe but the climate during the cold months is usually bracing. The most inhospitable months are April, May, June and July when the scorching sun or the torrential rains may cause great inconvenience.

Transport facilities available in the district have already been described in this chapter. With a sizable increase in intra-district bus services in recent years, almost all important places in Bankura may now be conveniently reached by this mode of conveyance. Buses also ply into the district from outside. For instance, there is a daily service between Calcutta and Purulia *via* Durgapur, Bankura town and Jhantipahari. The maximum number of buses (as also a few taxis) ply between Durgapur in Burdwan district and Bankura town. There are also regular services between Arambagh in Hooghly district and Vishnupur. Entry into the district is also possible by train which gives the choice of two routes (S. E. Railway and B. D. R. Railway) and several points of entry from Purulia, Midnapur and Burdwan. Of the various long-distances bus journeys within the district, those offering most charming landscape views are on the routes Durgapur-Tiluri, Bankura-Jhilimili and Purulia-Bankura.

A list of Circuit House, Dak Bungalows, Inspection Bungalows, Rest Houses, Rest-sheds, Rest-cum-Khālāsi sheds is appended at the end of the volume. In drawing up his itinerary, the tourist might find it useful to note that besides these there are two ordinary hotels at Vishnupur; three ordinary hotels, one *jātrinibās* and a Marwari *dharmasālā* at Bankura town and a guest house at Jayrāmbāṭi. A Government tourist lodge is under construction at Vishnupur. Accommodation in Government and the Zilla Parishad establishments of this type should be booked in advance.

POSTS, TELEGRAPHS AND TELEPHONES

It is not possible to state with any degree of accuracy as to when the first Post & Telegraph office was established in the district.

In 1863, Gastrell wrote: "The same system for letter and parcel carrying and delivery exists here as in other parts of India. ... There are three Post Offices in the District at Bancoorah, the Head-Quarter Station where the Deputy Post-Master of the Division resides, at Bishenpoor, and at Kotulpoor. All these are on the line of the old Trunk Road, along which communication is kept up by the regular Government Dawk-Runners. In Bancoorah the letters are distributed by Peons attached to the Post Office. But in the other two towns the letters etc. are delivered by *ticca* (hired) men paid by the persons receiving the letters. Letters for parties residing in villages at a distance from the Post Offices are generally forwarded to their destination through the Thannahs. Some are sent on for distribution by Chowkeydars, others by hired men who are paid by the recipients at certain fixed rates dependent on the distance they traverse. Neither of these modes appears to be very regular."[1] By 1908 there were altogether 644 km. (400 miles) of postal communication in the district and 67 post offices, i.e. one post office for every 101 sq. km. (39 sq. miles). "The number of postal articles delivered in 1906-07 was 19,51,482, including letters, postcards, packets, newspapers and parcels; while the value of money orders paid was Rs. 9,39,429 and of those issued Rs. 6,45,251. The number of Savings Bank deposits in the same year was 6,345, the amount deposited being Rs. 2,53,760. There are 4 postal-telegraph offices, from which 5,998 messages were issued in the same year; these offices are situated at Bankura, Bishnupur, Gangājalghāti and Sonāmukhi."[2]

There is no radio or wireless station in the district.

The administrative and organizational set-up of the Posts and Telegraphs Department in the district has been dealt with in Chapter IX on General Administration. There were 105 post offices in the district prior to the initiation of the Five Year Plans. During the First and Second Plans, the number of new post offices opened was 31 and 77 respectively. Out of the 55 post offices proposed to be opened during the Third Five Year Plan, 39 had been in operation by November 1962. The table below gives the number and categories of post offices in each police station as they stood in 1962.

Name of Police Station	Head Office	Sub-Office	Branch Office
Bankura	1	5	12
Barjora	—	2	12
Vishnupur	—	3	16
Chhatna	—	2	12

[1] J. E. Gastrell—Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah. Calcutta, 1863.

[2] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 122.

Name of Police Station	Head Office	Sub-Office	Branch Office
Gangajalghati	—	1	12
Indpur	—	2	13
Indas	—	1	10
Joypur	—	—	16
Khatra	—	2	10
Kotulpur	—	1	19
Mejia	—	1	7
Onda	—	1	18
Patrasayer	—	1	14
Ranibandh	—	—	9
Raipur	—	1	3
Saltora	—	—	9
Simlapal	—	1	9
Sonamukhi	—	1	16
Taldangra	—	1	8
TOTAL	1	26	225

In 1962, the receipt and despatch of ordinary postal articles at Bankura were approximately 2,000 per day. The corresponding figure for Vishnupur was 5,000. The number and class of postal articles handled by the post offices of the district every month (November 1962) were as below:

(i) No. of money orders issued	16,269	for Rs. 5,56,608.35
(ii) No. of money orders paid	17,986	for Rs. 6,38,350.06
(iii) No. of registered letters booked	19,771	
(iv) No. of registered parcels booked	1,184	
(v) No. of insured letters booked	208	
(vi) No. of insured parcels booked	189	

In April 1966, 3 telephone exchanges were working in the district at Bankura, Vishnupur and Jhantipahari. The details of their capacities and working connexions are given in the following table.

Location	Capacity	No. of working connexions	
		Direct	Extension
Bankura	300	289	44
Vishnupur	50	43	3
Jhantipahari	25	23	—

Of the three centres mentioned above, Vishnupur was the first to have an automatic telephone exchange. The Bankura, Vishnupur, Ōnda and Sonamukhi post offices provide telephone call facilities to the public.

Organizations of transport owners and employees

There is no organization of owners of transport in the district. In 1965, there were, however, two trade unions of the employees of the B. D. R. Railway, one of automobile workers, one of porters and one of cartmen of the district. Their particulars are given in the table below.

TRANSPORT WORKERS' TRADE UNIONS IN BANKURA DISTRICT

Regd. No.	Name of Union	Address	Membership (as on 31.3.65)
4583	Bankura Damodar River Railwaymen's Congress	Nutanganj, P.O. Bankura	334
5215	Bankura Damodar River Railway Workers' Congress	P.O. Sonamukhi	166
3254	Bankura Zilla Motor Mazdoor Sangha	Machantola, P.O. Bankura	150
6315	Bankura Muṭiā Samiti	Lalbazar, P.O. Bankura	105 (as on 8.6.65)
6230	Bankura Gārwān Samiti	Lalbazar, P.O. Bankura	86

CHAPTER VIII

ECONOMIC TRENDS & MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATIONS

LIVELIHOOD PATTERN

During the Census of 1951, the total population of the district was divided into two broad livelihood classes: agricultural and non-agricultural, each of which was again subdivided into four groups. In Bankura, the agricultural classes consisted of 10,78,375 and the non-agricultural classes 2,40,884 persons thus accounting for 81.7 and 18.3 per cent of the district population respectively. As regards sex ratios, there were 5,42,780 males and 5,35,595 females among the agricultural classes while non-agricultural classes had 1,23,073 males and 1,17,811 females. The percentage of male agricultural population to the total male population of the district was thus 81.5, while the corresponding percentage for the female agricultural population was 81.9. Similarly, the percentages of male non-agricultural workers and female non-agricultural workers to the total populations of the district of either sex was 18.5 and 18.1 respectively. The above figures reveal that female workers in both the broad livelihood classes were almost equal in percentage to their male co-workers.

Occupational classification may also be made under the categories: rural and urban. While the rural agricultural classes claimed 5,33,593 males and 5,25,837 females, the urban agricultural classes consisted of 9,187 males and 9,758 females only. Rural non-agricultural classes, on the other hand, accounted for 83,649 males and 81,562 females against 39,424 males and 36,249 females belonging to urban non-agricultural classes. The corresponding percentage figures are interesting: 31.41 per cent of the total non-agricultural population of the district was urban and 98.24 per cent of the total agricultural population of the district was rural.

The different livelihood classes in the agriculture category and the number of male and female workers in each are given below:

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
I. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependants	3,604	3,576	3,37,824	3,36,326
II. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependants	931	946	67,169	63,113
III. Cultivating labourers and their dependants	3,842	3,830	1,26,054	1,23,145
IV. Non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent-receivers and their dependants	810	1,406	2,546	3,253

In the Census of 1951, a distinction was made between 'cultivators' and 'cultivating labourers'. A 'cultivator' was a decision-maker, while a labourer acted under the direction of someone else. Cultivators were again divided into two groups: cultivating owners and cultivating tenants. Non-cultivating owners or rent-receivers in Class IV formed a class distinct from the 'cultivators' and 'cultivating labourers'. Any person "who receives rent in cash or kind in respect of land which is cultivated by another person" was placed in Class IV. The 1951 Census is regrettably vague about the crop-sharers, the *bāṭāidārs*, *bargādārs* and the *bhāgidārs* who constitute one of the largest agricultural groups in the district.

The four non-agricultural classes fall into groups defined primarily in terms of industry. These livelihood classes and the number of males and females enumerated against each are shown below:

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
V. Production other than cultivation	11,934	12,125	41,501	43,069
VI. Commerce	11,631	10,118	12,963	13,439
VII. Transport	2,867	2,592	2,180	1,910
VIII. Other services and miscellaneous sources	12,992	11,414	27,005	23,144

It may be observed that Class V includes manufacturing and mining as also agricultural plantations, forestry and fishing. Again, in presenting the data for manufacturing, the Census of 1951 bracketted village artisans and specialized handicraft workers with factory employees. Daniel and Alice Thorner are, therefore, perfectly right in pointing out that "the non-agricultural classes refer to four separate groups of industries; ...the agricultural livelihood classes (Nos. I-IV) refer only to one industry, namely agriculture. Hence the basis of the division into eight livelihood classes is somewhat unclear and confusing."[1]

The Census of 1951 also sorted out people as self-supporting persons, earning dependants and non-earning dependants. A self-supporting person was one with an income which was sufficient at least for his own maintenance. An earning dependant was one who was in receipt of an income not sufficient for his own support. A person having no income either in cash or in kind was a non-earning dependant. The following table gives an estimate of self-supporting persons, earning dependants and non-earning dependants under each broad livelihood class:

[1] Daniel and Alice Thorner—Land and Labour in India. Bombay, 1962. p. 161.

		Self-supporting persons		Earning dependants		Non-earning dependants	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All agricultural classes	Rural	2,36,592	43,484	38,655	36,947	2,58,346	4,45,984
	Urban	4,139	1,468	233	178	4,815	8,112
All non-agricultural classes	Rural	45,218	17,656	4,168	3,723	34,263	60,183
	Urban	19,366	3,389	972	391	19,086	32,469

In response to a United Nations recommendation, enumeration on the basis of status as employers, employees and independent workers was introduced in 1951. All dependants, whether earning or non-earning, whether working full-time or part-time or not at all, were excluded from the coverage of the status issue. Only self-supporting persons were classified as employers, employees or independent workers. Therefore, the data on status provide only a partial and incomplete picture of the district's working population. The table below gives an estimate of these groups:

	Employers		Employees		Independent workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Rural	2,679	143	16,371	3,757	24,177	12,782
Urban	830	62	7,728	1,254	10,511	1,869

It was also observed during the 1951 Census that 2,288 males and 1,178 females of the district subsisted on non-productive activities.

In the Census of 1961, new economic concepts were introduced and we find the population divided into workers and non-workers as two major groups instead of the previous agricultural and non-agricultural classes. According to this fresh classification, there were 6,06,293 workers and 10,58,220 non-workers in the district in 1961. The percentage of workers to the total population of the district was 36.42 while that of non-workers was 63.58. Sex-distribution among the workers and non-workers was as follows:

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Workers	29,309	5,249	4,22,362	1,49,373
Non-workers	34,824	52,775	3,53,928	6,16,693

Percentage of male workers to the total population of the district was 27.14 and that of female workers 9.29. Similarly, the percentages of male and female non-workers to the total population of the district was 23.36 and 40.22 respectively.

Workers were again subdivided into nine distinctive groups which are given below together with the respective number of males and females in each category and their combined percentage to the total population of the district:

	Male	Female	Percentage
I. Cultivator	2,51,750	66,178	19.10
II. Agricultural labourer	94,923	54,274	8.96
III. Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations, orchards and allied activities	9,716	1,723	0.69
IV. Household industry	22,260	13,000	2.12
V. Manufacturing other than household industry	12,432	4,815	1.04
VI. Construction	3,332	296	0.22
VII. Trade and commerce	14,763	3,553	1.10
VIII. Transport, storage and communications	4,469	106	0.27
IX. Other services	38,026	10,677	2.92

The district being essentially agricultural, the largest working population was related to cultivation and the smallest to construction.

According to a classification prepared by the Directorate of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, the persons at work in the district other than in cultivation have been grouped as follows:

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONS AT WORK OTHER THAN IN CULTIVATION

Occupations	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Livestock, forestry, fishing and hunting	324	72	10,560	2,221
Mining and quarrying	23	1	1,340	73
Manufacturing	8,936	2,531	23,223	14,640
Construction	1,169	105	2,163	191
Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services	109	177	155	10
Trade and commerce	5,981	265	8,782	3,288
Transport, storage and communications	2,474	80	1,995	26
Services	8,491	1,804	17,477	3,135
Activities not specifically defined	97	9	11,697	5,542

A separate classification of the people of the district, engaged in callings other than cultivation, is given in the following table which shows regional as also sexwise distribution under each occupational category:

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONS AT WORK OTHER THAN IN CULTIVATION

Occupations	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Professional, technical and related workers	2,062	563	7,380	536
Administrative, executive and managerial workers	851	17	210	2
Clerical and related workers	3,067	37	3,768	129
Sales workers	5,291	247	9,316	4,074
Farmers, fishermen, hunters and related workers	378	89	9,752	2,499
Miners, quarrymen and related workers	10	—	804	60
Workers in transport and communications	1,373	4	2,379	21
Craftsmen, production process workers and labourers not elsewhere classified	11,835	3,202	34,859	19,394
Service, sport and recreation workers	2,513	873	6,825	2,090
Workers not classifiable by occupation	224	12	2,201	321

The following table gives employment figures in the registered factories in the district which were engaged in major industries during 1951 and 1961.

Industry	Persons employed (1951)	Persons employed (1961)
Basic engineering	nil	nil
Other engineering	nil	53
Chemicals and rubber	77	62
Jute textiles	nil	nil
Cotton and other textiles	23	115
Food, beverage and tobacco	1,205	1,448 (only in food industries)
Consumer goods	nil	144 (other than food and textile industries)
Others	32	35
TOTAL	1,337	1,857

It is evident from the above table that employment in the registered factories related to major industries in the district increased by 1,520 persons between 1951 and 1961 which is equivalent to an increase of about 114 per cent. These figures also affirm a very uneven distribution of employment in the local industries and such lack of diversification reflects the underdeveloped nature of the district's economy.

Agro-economic survey of Kāshipur, a village in P.S. Sonamukhi

A very important field-study on rural occupational structures was conducted recently by the Agro-Economic Research Centre of the Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan at Kāshipur, a representative village of Bankura district lying in Sonamukhi police station.[1] The survey was first taken up in 1956 and was repeated in 1960 to record the intervening changes as also to arrive at comparative estimates. In the absence of any other similar study in the interior of the district so far, the Kāshipur survey assumes great importance as it throws a flood of light on the occupational patterns in a typically rural area of the district.

It was found that the number of those who cultivated land wholly or mainly owned increased from 45 in 1956 to 46 in 1960 whereas the number of those who cultivated land wholly or mainly unowned remained stationary at 23. On the other hand, while the number of agricultural workers registered a sizable increase from 55 in 1956 to 67 in 1960, that of agricultural rent-receivers fell from 3 in 1956 to 2 in 1960. Workers engaged in production other than cultivation showed a slight rise in numbers, from 32 in 1956 to 33 in 1960 but the number of traders increased substantially from 2 in 1956 to 4 in 1960. The number of people engaged in service, profession and miscellaneous occupations diminished to a very great extent from 79 in 1956 to only 27 in 1960. "The most significant changes", the Report observed, "in the pattern of primary occupation are reduction of the number of workers in service-profession-miscellaneous group and increase in the number of agricultural workers."

On a detailed analysis of the association of primary occupations with secondary ones in this village, the Report stated that the occupational structure did not seem to have registered a steady movement towards progress. The general conclusion in respect of caste-occupation relationship in the village was that the force of caste-tradition was less pronounced among the depressed caste people who had, by 1960, ceased to exist as owner-cultivators which category was then largely composed of upper-caste Hindus.

Employment Exchange

The District Employment Exchange, Bankura, having jurisdiction over the entire district, has been in operation since December 27, 1963. Prior to its opening, the Employment Exchange at Asansol used to cater to the needs of the job seekers of this district.

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[1] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—Kashipur, West Bengal: 1956-60: A Report on Re-survey of a Village: Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bharati. Santiniketan, 1962. pp. 31-40.

Yearwise figures of registrations, placements, vacancies notified, and 'Live Register' at the end of December each year as also the monthly average number of employers using the Bankura Employment Exchange are shown in the table below:

Year	Registrations	Placements	Vacancies notified	'Live Register' at the end of December	Monthly average number of employers using the Exchange
1964	11,553	6,876	6,908	5,387	6
1965	6,021	2,527	2,446	6,758	4

It is evident from the above figures that registrations were abnormally high during the first year of operation of the Exchange. The main reason for this was the bulk transfer of registration cards from the Asansol Exchange which previously held jurisdiction over the district. Majority of the applicants on the 'Live Register' belong to the clerical and un-skilled groups. It is significant that only a very few employers use the services of the Exchange. The reasons are: recruitment of the sons and relatives of existing employees, recruitment agreements with Trade Unions, absorption of retrenched staff transferred from other offices within the State as also from other States, recruitment of applicants who apply direct to the employers, recruitment of applicants who are already employed and who apply in response to advertisements in the press, urgency of recruitments and recruitments by promotion. Notified vacancies recorded a significant drop in 1965 and may be attributed partly to the suspension and postponement of the rural work programmes. In any case, the vacancies notified are not appreciable in number which may be due to the fact that the Exchange started functioning long after the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act came into force in the middle of 1960. During the first two years of its functioning, the Exchange experienced a shortage in the ranks of good typists, stenographers, engineering graduates and teachers (Hons. and trained) and had surplus registrants having educational qualifications up to the School Final, Intermediate or Degree standards and unskilled workers.

Efforts are made by the Exchange to divert candidates from crowded occupations to those in which employment opportunities are expanding by informing intending registrants possessing the requisite age and qualifications about the shortage of occupations as also of institutions which impart training for such occupations and so on.

For smooth running of the District Employment Exchange, Bankura, there are two sanctioned posts of Assistant Employment Officers who are helped by the usual complement of office staff.

The establishment cost incurred by this unit during 1964-65 amounted to Rs. 18,854. There are two Employment Information & Assistance Bureaux at Onda and Patrasayer which disseminate employment information among the rural people in the respective Blocks.

PRICES

Some of the earliest statistics relating to prices of important foodgrains in the Bankura district are to be found in Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal.[1] He quoted prices of important cereals as they obtained in the district in 1860 and 1871. Corresponding prices, as they stood at different times between 1891 and 1905, have been calculated in the table below from the data furnished by O'Malley in his Bankura District Gazetteer.[2] It will be seen from the statement below that there has been a consistent rise in the prices of common rice and wheat over the years from 1860 to 1905.

PRICES PER MAUND OF COMMON RICE, WHEAT AND SALT IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1860 TO 1905

Year	Common Rice (Rs. As.)		Wheat (Rs. As.)		Salt (Rs. As.)	
1860	—	15	2	—	—	—
1871	1	4	3	—	—	—
1891-1895 (Average)	2	6½	3	2	3	13
1896-1900 ,,	2	10	3	6½	4	1
1901-1905 ,,	2	14	3	7	3	5

The period of the First World War and the decade that followed were marked by high prices of agricultural produce. There was a steep rise in the general level of prices after the Second World War as well. The acute shortage of foodgrains caused by the conditions created by war was undoubtedly the principal factor contributing to this increase in the general level of prices. The following table gives a comparative statement of the harvest prices of certain important crops per maund prevailing just after the two World Wars.

Commodity	1920-21[3] (Rs. As.)		1946-47[4] (Rs. As.)	
Winter rice (cleaned)	6	0	10	0
Autumn rice (cleaned)	5	8	9	8
Wheat	6	0	23	8

[1] W. W. Hunter—A Statistical Account of Bengal (Vol. IV). London, 1876. pp. 249-50.
[2] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 105.
[3] Season and Crop Report of Bengal for 1920-21. Calcutta, 1921. Appendix —VI. pp. 44-45.
[4] Season and Crop Reports of West Bengal for 1946-47. Calcutta, 1952. Appendix—VI. pp. 10-11.

After independence, prices, not only of the staple food crops, but virtually of every necessity of life, have spiralled more or less steadily. For instance, the price per maund of winter rice in both the Sadar and Vishnupur subdivisions was Rs. 16-6½ as. in 1951[1] which increased to Rs. 18-8 as. in Vishnupur and Rs. 22 in the Sadar subdivision in 1961.[2]

The following table[3] gives the average monthly wholesale prices per maund of three principal agricultural commodities prevailing in Bankura and Vishnupur towns from 1961 to 1965.

AVERAGE MONTHLY WHOLESALE PRICES

(Rs. per unit shown within brackets)

		Paddy (medium)	Rice (medium)	Split pulses *Arhar* (big)
January				
1961	Bankura	12.37 (md.)	21.12 (md.)	20.37 (md.)
	Vishnupur	11.25 („)	19.00 („)	19.87 („)
1962	Bankura	11.99 („)	27.75 („)	22.25 („)
	Vishnupur	11.03 („)	—	21.37 („)
1963	Bankura	32.12 (75 kg.)	52.50 (75 kg.)	74.35 (75 kg.)
	Vishnupur	31 00 („)	51.00 („)	74.20 („)
1964	Bankura	37.49 (qtl.)	63.62 (qtl.)	94.98 (qtl.)
	Vishnupur	39.57 („)	68.18 („)	87.43 („)
1965	Bankura	35.10 („)	63.11 („)	—
	Vishnupur	40.41 („)	70.49 („)	131.28 („)
April				
1961	Bankura	11.60 (md.)	19.60 (md.)	20.00 (md.)
	Vishnupur	10.95 („)	18.30 („)	20.50 („)
1962	Bankura	29.64 (75 kg.)	47.27 (75 kg.)	57.63 (qtl.)
	Vishnupur	28.77 („)	46.17 („)	56.95 („)
1963	Bankura	38.62 („)	60.00 („)	72.59 („)
	Vishnupur	38.51 („)	60.01 („)	72.28 („)
1964	Bankura	38.15 (qtl.)	65.29 (qtl.)	98.12 („)
	Vishnupur	40.60 („)	69.18 („)	102.17 („)
1965	Bankura	38.29 („)	63.86 („)	104.54 („)
	Vishnupur	40.53 („)	68.78 („)	121.85 („)

[1] Supplement to the Calcutta Gazette, July 26, 1951.
[2] Supplement to the Calcutta Gazette, November 9, 1961.
[3] The figures are compiled from the office of the Marketing Intelligence Officer, Department of Agriculture and Community Development, West Bengal.

		Paddy (medium)	Rice (medium)	Split pulses *Arhat* (big)
August				
1961	Bankura	12.56 (md.)	21.50 (md.)	20.06 (md.)
	Vishnupur	12.56 („)	21.50 („)	19.12 („)
1962	Bankura	31.27 (75 kg.)	50.65 (75 kg.)	76.25 (qtl.)
	Vishnupur	29.37 („)	48.37 („)	76.03 („)
1963	Bankura	40.10 („)	64.00 („)	76.61 („)
	Vishnupur	38.61 („)	62.56 („)	76.25 („)
1964	Bankura	38.57 (qtl.)	65.38 (qtl.)	112.53 („)
	Vishnupur	40.86 („)	71.31 („)	103.62 („)
1965	Bankura	43.75 („)	75.55 („)	107.08 („)
	Vishnupur	40.91 („)	68.05 („)	102.66 („)

Since prices do not change in a uniform way, the differential price movements are significant for a study in the change in an economy. From this standpoint, G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta[1] collected price data from the records of shopkeepers in the village of Kāshipur (P. S. Sonamukhi) for a period of five years from May 1956 to May 1960 as shown in the table below:

	Price of paddy (Rs. per Md.)	Percentage rise taking May 1956 figure as base	Price of rice (Rs. per Md.)	Percentage rise taking May 1956 figure as base
May 1956	11.00	—	23.00	—
May 1957	11.50	4.5	25.00	8.17
May 1958	12.00	9.1	26.00	13.0
May 1959	12.00	9.1	24.00	4.3
May 1960	12.50	13.6	23.00	nil

The authors of the Report also observed that prices of some other commodities, e.g. pulses, mustard oil etc. also increased sharply during 1958 and 1959.

Cost of Living Index Number

The Cost of Living Index for a particular locality over a specified period is the cost of maintaining a certain standard of living during that period expressed as a percentage of the cost of maintaining the same standard in another period, known as the 'base'. The Cost of Living Index for Bankura for the period 1961-64 is given in the table below.[2]

[1] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—op. cit. pp. 12-13.
[2] The table is based on data obtained from the State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal.

COST OF LIVING INDEX NUMBER
(Base: November 1950=100)
Monthly Averages
Centre: Bankura

Items of consumption	Year	MONTHLY INCOME LEVEL				
		Rs. 1-100	Rs. 101-200	Rs. 201-350	Rs. 351-700	Rs. 701 and above
Food	1961	106.1	106.5	106.9	107.1	106.2
	1962	115.0	114.7	114.0	113.7	112.1
	1963	133.6	131.0	128.4	126.0	122.4
	1964	136.0	134.2	132.3	132.4	131.1
All combined	1961	109.8	110.7	110.0	109.7	111.0
	1962	116.4	116.1	114.4	113.4	114.5
	1963	130.5	127.1	123.1	119.8	119.8
	1964	133.2	130.1	126.4	123.6	124.8

Consumer Price Index for working classes

The table below,[1] containing the Consumer Price Index Numbers compiled jointly for working classes in the neighbouring districts of Bankura and Midnapur, gives an idea of the standard of living obtaining among the working classes of the district of Bankura in 1961 and 1965 taking 1951 as the base.

Year	Month	Food	Fuel and lighting	Clothing	Misc.	House rent	Combined
1961	January	108	121	75	111	100	107
	April	106	125	75	115	100	107
	August	112	126	78	112	100	111
1965	January	136	148	94	127	100	132
	April	131	149	93	129	100	129
	August	148	153	93	133	100	141

WAGES

Some 90 years ago, when Hunter wrote his Statistical Account of Bengal, the general level of wages in Bankura district was unbelievably low compared to present-day standards. Even so, he said: "Wages have considerably increased of late years. The present wages of coolies and of agricultural day labourers are returned at 2 annas per diem, those of smiths from 3 to 4 annas per diem, carpenters from 3 to 5 annas per diem. Bricklayers generally work on contract and are paid by the job."[2] Thirty-two years later, O'Malley observed that there had been a general rise in the wages of both skilled and unskilled labour in the district mainly due to the

[1] The figures have been supplied by the Statistical Section of the Directorate of Labour, West Bengal.
[2] W. W. Hunter—op. cit. pp. 249-50.

introduction of railways and the consequent inter-communication with centres of industry. "A carpenter", he wrote, "now obtains a daily wage of 6 to 8 annas according to his skill, while masons and blacksmiths receive from 5 to 6 annas per diem. Unskilled labour is paid for at the rate of 3 to 3½ annas a day. ... Wages are generally paid in cash in the towns, but in the villages labourers are usually paid in kind."[1] O'Malley also spoke of two special classes of labourers employed in cultivating the lands of others, who, as a rule, used to be paid in kind. "The first consists of farm labourers called *krishāns* or *māhindārs*, who receive a share of the produce of the land they cultivate. If they supply seed and cattle for the cultivator, besides giving their manual labour, their remuneration is half of the produce, but, if the owner of the land supplies the seed and cattle, they receive only one-third of the produce. It is reported that, if they are paid in cash, their wage ranges from Rs. 30 to Rs. 36 per annum, in addition to food and clothes. The class of labourers known as *gātāniā munis*, i.e., engaged labourers, are paid one or two seers of parched rice and three seers of paddy daily and are given Rs. 2 in cash at the end of the year, besides two pieces of cloth. They are also remunerated by the grant of a piece of land, generally not exceeding one *bighā* in area, the produce of which is their own entirely. This land is called *bānṭāriā*, meaning land due to the holder of the yoke (*bānṭā*) of the plough. Sometimes also, when threshing is complete, these labourers get one or one-and-a-half *māps* of paddy, a *māp* being equivalent to 3 maunds and 28 seers; this perquisite is called *kānkrā*."[2]

G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta also found between 1956 and 1960 two types of agricultural labourers in Kāshipur who were locally called *māhindār* and *chhuṭomunish* respectively. "The farm servants or the *mahindars*, depending on the nature of work they undertook, had their annual wages fixed. The *mahindar* also had his meals and clothings from the owner's household. Apart from doing work in the field for the whole year, the *mahindar* also performed domestic service in the owner's household. The *munish*, on the other hand, was a contract labourer who agreed to work with an owner in a particular season for which he was paid in advance a fixed amount of paddy. According to the terms of contract, the *munish* was at the disposal of the owner for any operation beginning from sowing up to harvesting. The *munish* was paid wages in kind on the working days at a rate slightly lower than the market rate. He was also given puffed rice and tobacco as perquisites. The *munish* was free to work elsewhere when the owner did not require him."[3]

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—op. cit. pp. 102-03.
[2] ibid. p. 103.
[3] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—op. cit. pp. 8-9.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES (IN RUPEES) IN BANKURA DISTRICT DURING REPRESENTATIVE MONTHS OF 1960 & 1965

Year and Month	Normal daily working hours	Field labour (per day)			Other agricultural labour (per day)			Herdsmen (per animal)		
		Man	Woman	Child	Man	Woman	Child	Man	Woman	Child
1960										
January	8	1.56	1.18	0.75	1.50	1.00	0.75	1.18	0.75	1.00
April	6	1.50	1.25	0.75	1.50	1.00	0.75	1.25	0.75	0.50
August	6	1.87	1.50	1.00	1.75	1.25	1.00	1.12	0.75	0.75
1965										
January	8	1.87	1.50	—	1.49	1.25	—	1.74	1.37	—
April	8	2.24	—	—	1.75	—	—	2.00	1.50	1.25
August	8	1.87	1.62	—	1.87	1.62	—	2.00	1.87	1.21

Agricultural wages prevailing in the district during representative months of 1960 and 1965 are shown in the preceding table. (The figures are in rupees and paise).[1]

The level of wages of workers employed in other fields of production underwent fluctuations along with the general level of prices of commodities. During the First World War and the period immediately following it, there was an increase in the workers' wages but the decade 1931-40 was a period of economic depression when the wage level showed a downward trend. After the Second World War, the wage level has been rising steadily. The following table shows labour wages (without food) for the last week of March in 1951[2] and 1961[3] in the two subdivisions of the district.

	1951 (Rs.)	1961 (Rs.)
Sadar	1.10	1.50
Vishnupur	1.12	1.50

FAMILY BUDGETS

The State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal conducted two family budget surveys at Bankura town (as also in other towns of West Bengal) during 1950-51[4] and 1955-56.[5] Informations regarding distribution of family budgets according to monthly income levels, distribution of family budgets according to monthly expenditure levels and percentage expenditure on different items of consumption by different expenditure levels, as gleaned from the said surveys, are presented in the three tables below:

FAMILY BUDGETS BY MONTHLY INCOME LEVELS

Monthly income groups (in Rs.)	1950-51		1955-56	
	No. of families enumerated	Percentage to total No. of families	No. of families enumerated	Percentage to total No. of families
1-100	99	43.23	119	60.72
101-200	73	31.88	51	26.02
201-350	38	16.59	18	9.18
351 and above	19	8.30	8	4.08
Total	229	100.00	196	100.00

[1] Figures for 1960 have been compiled from 'Agricultural Wages in India' for 1959-60 & 1960-61 and those relating to 1965 have been supplied by the Statistical Officer, Directorate of Agriculture, West Bengal.
[2] Supplement to Calcutta Gazette. April 12, 1951.
[3] Supplement to Calcutta Gazette. November 22, 1962.
[4] Family Budget Enquiry in 23 Towns of West Bengal including Calcutta, 1950-51. Calcutta, 1954. pp. 50-53, 54 and 128.
[5] Family Budget Enquiry in 24 Towns of West Bengal including Calcutta, 1955-56. Calcutta, 1960. pp. 12, 13 and 78.

FAMILY BUDGETS BY MONTHLY EXPENDITURE LEVELS

Monthly expenditure groups (in Rs.)	1950-51		1955-56	
	No. of families enumerated	Percentage to total No. of families	No. of families enumerated	Percentage to total No. of families
1-100	99	43.23	106	54.08
101-200	77	33.62	50	25.51
201-350	36	15.72	29	14.80
351 and above	17	7.43	11	5.61
Total	229	100.00	196	100.00

PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE ON CONSUMPTION BY DIFFERENT EXPENDITURE LEVELS

Items of consumption	Monthly expenditure level (in Rs.)	Percentage of total expenditure	
		1950-51	1955-56
Food	1-100	69.10	68.47
	101-200	61.44	63.68
	201-350	51.47	51.58
	351-700	41.64	47.23
	701 and above	38.96	39.12
Fuel and light	1-100	7.44	7.00
	101-200	6.16	5.41
	201-350	5.23	4.68
	351-700	3.24	4.62
	701 and above	3.73	3.70
Clothing	1-100	6.53	6.84
	101-200	6.33	6.05
	201-350	5.54	6.58
	351-700	4.68	7.91
	701 and above	4.77	7.80

PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE ON CONSUMPTION BY DIFFERENT EXPENDITURE LEVELS

Items of consumption	Monthly expenditure level (in Rs.)	Percentage of total expenditure	
		1950-51	1955-56
Housing	1-100	2.16	2.81
	101-200	2.66	3.73
	201-350	4.31	4.64
	351-700	3.46	7.75
	701 and above	5.70	7.30
Miscellaneous	1-100	14.77	14.88
	101-200	23.41	21.13
	201-350	33.45	32.52
	351-700	46.98	32.49
	701 and above	46.84	42.08

The data used in the three preceding tables relate specifically to urban conditions which are obviously different from those obtaining in the rural areas. Analogous figures relating to a typical rural area of the district were collected by G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta when they surveyed the Kāshipur village in Sonamukhi police station in 1956 and 1960.[1] The results of their findings are given in the following table for the interpretation of which it would be best to quote its authors. "The Table indicates the pattern of distribution of consumption as between different groups of articles in 1955-56 and 1959-60. Speaking in general, the differences between the two patterns are not significantly large. It, however, appears that there was a little increase in the proportion of cereals in the consumption-pattern of the households. This increase is observable in the case of all classes excepting the rent receivers. The highest rate of increase accrued in the case of cultivators of land mainly or wholly unowned who raised the consumption of cereals from 48 per cent. to 62 per cent. In the case of the cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned, the consumption of cereals increased from 46 per cent. to 50 per cent. On an average the proportion of cereal-consumption increased from 53 per cent. to 56 per cent., while the total consumption of food and drink increased from 76 per cent. to 79 per cent. and non-cereal consumption increased from 21 per cent. to 22 per cent. Proportion of expenditure on clothing slightly

[1] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—op. cit. pp. 57-59.

CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE BY OCCUPATION CLASS IN KASHIPUR (P.S. SONAMUKHI), BANKURA : 1956 & 1960

(As percentage of total expenditure)

Occupation Group	Year	Cereals	Non-cereals	Drink	Total food and drink	Fuel and lighting	Education	Medical	Drinking and intoxicants	Clothing	Others	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned	1956	45.51	22.14	4.33	71.98	4.28	0.76	3.06	3.97	9.10	6.85	100
	1960	50.20	23.79	1.65	75.64	2.92	2.77	3.92	3.19	8.45	3.11	100
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned	1956	47.77	23.19	2.32	73.28	4.68	0.05	6.28	5.53	7.29	2.89	100
	1960	61.74	18.46	1.00	81.20	2.37	0.39	2.69	2.86	8.20	2.29	100
Agricultural labour	1956	62.99	17.56	0.28	80.83	1.33	—	0.80	7.27	7.48	2.29	100
	1960	64.56	20.80	0.03	85.39	3.76	—	0.26	2.27	7.25	1.08	100
Agricultural rent receiver	1956	48.11	25.78	4.93	78.82	1.30	6.78	1.23	—	9.25	2.62	100
	1960	41.26	25.30	1.51	68.07	8.74	—	—	2.41	13.25	7.53	100
Production other than cultivation	1956	54.15	21.05	1.12	76.32	2.29	1.79	1.72	2.72	10.87	4.29	100
	1960	54.17	20.90	0.20	75.27	3.63	5.65	2.36	2.78	8.21	2.14	100
Trade and commerce	1956	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1960	41.64	32.85	0.48	74.97	4.15	1.27	1.11	5.90	7.66	4.94	100
Service, profession and Miscellaneous	1956	64.92	16.01	0.65	81.58	1.38	—	1.01	7.12	7.66	1.25	100
	1960	70.66	9.96	0 67	81.29	5.32	—	0.61	2.76	8.41	1.61	100
Total	1956	52.54	20.52	2.53	75.59	3.21	0.53	2.72	5.16	8.44	4.35	100
	1960	53.87	21.74	1.05	78.66	3.16	1.92	2.69	2.93	8.16	2.48	100

diminished, but that on education increased from 0.53 per cent. to 1.92 per cent. and expenditure on smoking and intoxicants decreased from 5 per cent. to 3 per cent. Proportion of 'other' expenditures also decreased from 4 per cent. to 2 per cent. On the whole it appears that the increase in income of the people of Kashipur was mostly utilized in increasing the consumption of cereals."[1]

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In Bankura district, work relating to Community Development started late in 1952. In fact, the first Block to be set up was at Sonamukhi which began functioning on October 2, 1952. Thereafter, 21 more Blocks have come up in the district which are either at Stage I or Stage II of their development.[2] The entire district is now covered by 22 Community Development Blocks, important details about which (valid for April 1966) are given in the table below:

IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS IN BANKURA DISTRICT

Name of Block	Stage	Area		No. of villages in the Block	Total population
		Sq. km.	Sq. miles		
Bankura I	Stage I	181.3	70.0	161	1,23,333
Bankura II	,,	227.4	87.8	154	63,932
Chhatna	,,	354.8	173.0	288	1,05,884
Onda	,,	502.5	194.0	351	1,10,882
Mejia	,,	162.9	62.9	75	34,068
Saltora	,,	314.7	121.5	157	71,016
Gangajalghati	Stage II	371.2	143.3	264	90,000 (approx.)
Khatra I	Stage I	232.3	89.7	151	54,321
Khatra II	,,	198.4	76.6	120	45,557
Raipur I	,,	295.3	114.0	276	68,810
Raipur II	,,	290.3	112.1	288	62,303
Ranibandh	Stage II	428.4	165.4	330	66,000
Simlapal	Stage I	309.3	119.4	203	61,175
Taldangra	,,	349.7	135.0	202	61,635
Indpur	,,	300.4	116.0	222	74,719
Barjora	,,	393.4	151.9	323	91,817

[1] loc. cit.

[2] A Block in the first year of its existence is in the Pre-Extension Stage, during the next 5 years in Stage I, for the following 5 years in Stage II and, thereafter, in Post-Stage II.

IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS IN BANKURA DISTRICT (*contd.*)

Name of Block	Stage	Area		No. of villages in the Block	Total population
		Sq. km	Sq. miles		
Vishnupur	Stage I	393.7	152.0	162	1,01,307
Sonamukhi	Post-Stage II	489.5	189.0	185	82,669 (approx.)
Patrasayer	Stage II	321.2	124.0	161	83,325
Kotulpur	Stage I	250.5	96.7	200	77,877
Indas	,,	255.1	98.5	131	73,470
Joypur	,,	261.3	100.9	297	41,047

Administrative set-up in the Blocks

Generally speaking, the administrative personnel in a Development Block is headed by the Block Development Officer who is assisted by eight Extension Officers, one each for agriculture, animal husbandry, rural engineering, social education, programmes for women and children, co-operation, rural industries and panchayats. There are also a number of Village Level Workers and Grām Sevikās besides the usual complement of other staff consisting of progress assistants, office clerks, drivers etc. The B.D.O. is in overall charge of the work in a Block and supervises the work of the entire staff under him. In addition, he also looks after the work of the Ānchalik Parishad as its Chief Executive Officer. He is also *ex-officio* Inspector of Panchayats in respect of the panchayats within his jurisdiction. The Extension Officers are in immediate charge of the work falling within their respective fields. The Village Level Workers or the Grām Sevaks demonstrate the use of better seeds, manures and improved agricultural implements in the villages, organize campaigns for wider use of fertilizers as also for artificial insemination of cattle, advise rural people on cattle feed, digging of compost pits, chlorination of water and rural housing, carry on propaganda through distribution of leaflets or other audio-visual media, organize vaccination campaigns, arrange group competitions and collect statistics etc. The Grām Sevikās look after education, gardening as also starting of clubs and associations for village women.

Welfare activities in Block areas

It would appear from the list of duties of the personnel attached to a Development Block that they are engaged in welfare activities of a diverse nature within their respective jurisdictions. The schemes normally handled by Block administrations consist of those relating to animal husbandry and agricultural extension, irrigation and reclamation of land, health and rural sanitation, general and social education, communications, rural arts, crafts and industries, co-operation, housing, employment and the Panchayati Raj. Some of these schemes are executed exclusively with Government finance while peoples'

participation is solicited in respect of others although the objective of the Development Programme is to associate the local people with every scheme implemented within a Block area. The total expenditure incurred by each Block administration in Bankura district for all its welfare activities would give an idea of the extent of the services rendered by it to the respective rural communities. The table below shows such total expenditures incurred during 1964-65 in the 22 Blocks in the district.

Name of Subdivision	Name of Block	Total expenditure incurred in 1964-65 for all welfare activities (in Rs.)
Bankura (Sadar)	Bankura I	1,13,727.00
	Bankura II	25,070.00
	Chhatna	58,382.84
	Onda	1,83,277.51
	Mejia	1,54,449.96
	Saltora	1,61,738.00
	Gangajalghati	72,126.00
	Khatra I	Not available
	Khatra II	34,519.68
	Raipur I	37,325.43
	Raipur II	1,98,869.00
	Ranibandh	74,474.27
	Simlapal	2,09,221.00
	Taldangra	1,93,358.13
	Indpur	9.603.00
	Barjora	15,506.64
Vishnupur	Vishnupur	41,018 00
	Sonamukhi	11,776.75
	Patrasayer	88,586.39
	Kotulpur	51,049.61
	Indas	10,300.00
	Joypur	1,36,245.00
	Total	18,80,624.21

LEARNED PROFESSIONS

According to the 1961 Census, physicians, surgeons and dentists numbered 960 in the district. Of them allopathic, *āyurvedic* and

homoeopathic physicians showed an urban-rural distribution as below:

	Urban	Rural
Allopathic physicians	110	30
Āyurvedic ,,	20	147
Homoeopathic ,,	53	198

The same Census enumerated 394 persons in the district who were engaged in engineering and architectural professions. Of them civil engineers, overseers and surveyors were dispersed in the urban and rural areas of the district in the following manner:

	Urban	Rural
Civil engineers (including overseers)	88	46
Surveyors	45	47

In 1961 there were 5,821 teachers of all cetegories in the district of whom college and school teachers had the following urban-rural distribution:

	Urban	Rural
College teachers	149	17
Secondary school teachers	334	748
Middle and Primary school teachers	283	3,599

According to the same source, the district, in 1961, had 167 lawyers and 270 writers, artists and allied workers.

Domestic & personal services

Statistics relating to domestic and personal services obtaining in the district (as collected from the 1961 Census) are given below:

	Urban	Rural
Tailors, cutters, furriers and related workers	667	698
Housekeepers, cooks, maids and related workers	1,443	5,748
Barbers, hairdressers, beauticians and related workers	232	1,032
Launderers, dry-cleaners and pressers	204	163

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

THE STATE GOVERNMENT SET-UP

District Magistrate and Collector

A chronological account of the formation of the district and the growth of its administrative machinery has already been given in Chapters I and II. The District Magistrate and Collector of Bankura (or, for that matter, of any other district in West Bengal) is in overall charge of the administration of the district both in its revenue and executive spheres. He is also the chief representative of the Government 'on the spot' maintaining an abiding link with the latter.

As the Collector, he is the head of the revenue administration in the district and is responsible to the Government through the Board of Revenue. The maintenance of land records and the collection of diverse statistics at the village level are his important duties which he discharges through a hierarchy of revenue officials working under him. Although the periodical settlement operations in a district are conducted by a separate staff belonging to the establishment of the Director of Land Records & Surveys, the Collector is responsible for the maintenance and correction of connected records. The hearing of appeals against the decisions of subordinate revenue officers in a variety of matters also falls within his jurisdiction. He is also the controlling authority of excise administration in the district, but the day-to-day work is carried on by a Superintendent of Excise with the help of staff placed under him.

On the other hand, in his capacity as the District Magistrate, he is primarily responsible for the maintenance of law and order within his jurisdiction. For this purpose, the district police force, under the immediate control of a Superintendent of Police, takes orders from him. The Collector is also the controlling authority in respect of the prosecuting staff. He grants, suspends and cancels licences for arms, explosives and petroleum. He has duties to perform in respect of jails, anti-corruption matters and issue of passports. He grants nationality certificates as also certificates to applicants attesting that they belong to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. As the executive head of the district and the principal local agent of the Government, he also exercises various residuary powers. In emergencies like floods and famines, he is expected to take necessary steps for arresting the calamities and providing relief to the victims. When the security of the country is threatened, the District Magistrate assumes the role of Controller of Civil Defence. He is also responsible for the satisfactory conduct of all general elections held in the

district from time to time. The decennial census operations also call for his active help and participation. Food and civil supplies also engage his constant attention these days although there is a District Controller of Food and Civil Supplies with an adequate establishment under him. To keep the authorities posted on all matters relating to his varied charges, he has to send to the Divisional Commissioner and the various Departments and Directorates of Government a large number of periodical reports and returns.

A Magistrate-Collector is nothing if he is not in constant and intimate touch with people in all walks of life living in the district. For this he has to associate himself with numerous official and non-official institutions. In Bankura, he is a member of the governing bodies of the Bankura Sammilani Medical College and the Bankura Christian College in addition to his being either the President or the Chairman of the following educational, co-operative, sports and miscellaneous organizations: Rāmānanda College, Vishnupur; K. G. Engineering Institute, Vishnupur; Bankura Zilla School; Bankura Girls' High School; Bankura Music School; Beliātore High School; Māliārā N. M. High School; Jhilimili Kalyān Niketan; Uttarāyan Society, Dubrājpur; Gadārdihi Sikshā Niketan; Kalyān Niketan, Chhandār; Palli Bhārati, Khātrā; Janakalyān Samiti, Hārmāsrā; Purbāchal Samiti, Ondā; Priti Kalyān Samiti, Jhānṭipāhāri; Behārināth Samajkalyān Samiti, Tiluri; Rāmāi Chandidās Sanskriti Sansthā, Bankura; Bānibitān Pāṭhsālā; Bijoy Vidyā Niketan, Lakshminagar; Karmi Sikshā Kendra, Hātiā; District Co-operative Industrial Union Ltd.; District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd.; Land Mortgage Bank, Bankura; District Agricultural Association; District Sporting Association; Deshbandhu Byāyāmāgār, Bankura; Bankura Club; District Officers' Club; District Youth Welfare Council; Red Cross, Bankura District Branch; Jhānṭipāhāri Maternity Clinic Committee; Edward Memorial Hall Trust Committee; Rabindranath Tagore Centenary Committee; State Welfare Home, Bankura; Bāl Bhavan, Benāchāpṭā and Regional Transport Authority, Bankura.

Prior to the introduction of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the District Magistrate exercised close financial and administrative control over the local bodies which was slackened to a great extent after 1919. The D. M. of Bankura has now a supervising right over the municipalities in his district and may refuse to ratify municipal resolutions posing a threat to public peace. In cases of serious irregularity on the part of the municipalities, he may advise Government for their supersession. The Panchayati Raj in this district, as in other districts of West Bengal, is a four-tier system with the Grām Panchayats at the base, the Anchal Panchayats and Ānchalik Parishads in the middle and the Zilla Parishad at the top. The Collector is empowered to call for and inspect any document of

the Zilla Parishad, cause the Zilla Parishad to furnish information as he thinks necessary and inspect the office of the Zilla Parishad or any institution under its control.

After independence, the successive Five Year Plans with their socio-economic development programmes have added new dimensions to the traditional functions of the Magistrate-Collector. The district level officers of various departments concerned with community development programmes relating to agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, co-operation, small-scale and cottage industries, panchayats, education, social education, communication, health etc. normally work under their respective departmental superiors but the Collector, as the principal co-ordinating agency in the district, gives them general guidance, assesses progress and ensures that obstacles in the implementation of their tasks are removed. The Collector is assisted in this behalf by a Special Officer, Planning and Development.

District Development Council

In exercising his responsibility for implementing community development programmes in the district, the Magistrate-Collector is advised by a District Development Council which co-ordinates the activities of the different operating agencies of Government as well as between them and the people. It consists of the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad, the Chairmen of the municipalities, the Superintendent of Police, the President of the District School Board, a representative of Anchal Panchayats from each police station, the local members of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and Council as also of the Union Parliament and the Council of States, district-level officers in charge of Departments concerned with development schemes, Subdivisional Officers and private persons appointed by the State Government. It functions more as a co-ordinating and advisory body than as a planning committee.

Block Development Committee

At the Block level, the Block Development Committee consists of all the Block-level officers and distinguished non-officials and co-ordinates all activities within the Block for implementation of development programmes. Originally, the District Magistrate or the Subdivisional Officer used to be its Chairman. But the office is now held by a non-official and the name of the Committee has since been changed from the Block Advisory Committee to Block Development Committee. The panchayati institutions are represented on such a committee in sufficient strength.

As regards the supervision of his own office, the District Magistrate depends on the services of an Office Superintendent and a Head Clerk who look after the work of the clerical staff of the Collectorate, numbering 283 in 1965-66, of whom 99 were permanent and 184 temporary.

Additional District Magistrate

In 1965-66, there was only one Additional District Magistrate in Bankura exercising equivalent powers and having concurrent jurisdiction with the District Magistrate. This officer is designated Addi-

tional District Magistrate (Estates Acquisition) and holds superior charge of the Estates Acquisition, Khâsmahal, Touzi and Cess and Land Registration departments. He remains in charge of the district during the absence of the District Magistrate.

Deputy & Sub-Deputy Magistrates

In 1965-66, the sanctioned strength of Deputy Magistrates & Deputy Collectors for the Bankura (Sadar) subdivision was 13 of whom one was holding charge of the subdivision, one was acting as the Additional Subdivisional Officer (since 1.1.65), one was the District Panchayat Officer & Special Officer, Planning and Development, 4 were trying magistrates and the rest held charge of the various departments of the Collectorate. The sanctioned strength of Sub-Deputy Magistrates & Sub-Deputy Collectors for the Sadar subdivision was 31 of whom one was Special Officer, Tribal Welfare, 8 tried criminal cases along with other duties, 15 were Block Development Officers and the rest were engaged in the various departments of the Collectorate. In Vishnupur subdivision, the sanctioned strength of Deputy Magistrates & Deputy Collectors for the same year was 5 of whom one was employed as the Subdivisional Officer, 2 (including the Second Officer) were trying magistrates and the rest were engaged in general duties. Of the 12 Sub-Deputy Magistrates & Sub-Deputy Collectors sanctioned for the subdivision, 6 were trying magistrates (including the Third Officer) with additional departmental duties and 6 functioned as Block Development Officers.

Registration administration

The District Magistrate is the *ex-officio* District Registrar; the District Sub-Registrar carries on the routine duties of the former and attends to the day-to-day work. The latter is a registering authority in respect of Bankura Sadar and Chhatna police stations. He is also the Registrar under section 7 (2) of the I. R. Act and, as such, registers documents from all parts of the district. He hears appeals against orders of refusal passed by the Sub-Registrars and is authorized to inspect all Sub-Registration and Marriage Registration offices in the district. He is also the registering authority under the Citizenship Registration Act, the Special Marriage Act, the Hindu Marriages Act and has powers to register voters for general elections. Besides the District Sub-Registrar, there are 9 other Sub-Registrars in the district posted at Onda, Gangajalghati, Khatra, Raipur, Vishnupur, Kotulpur, Sonamukhi, Indas and Saltora.

The following table gives the fiscal picture during 1964-65 of all the registration offices in the district taken together.

	Total receipts (Rs.)	Total expenditure (Rs.)	Surplus (Rs.)
Registration wing	3,67,284.35	1,34,708.09	2,32,576.26
Bengal Tenancy Act wing	6,363.10	3,409.80	2,953.30
Total	3,73,647.45	1,38,117.89	2,35,529.56

Agricultural administration

The agricultural administration is headed by a Project Executive Officer, who is in overall charge for implementing all agricultural schemes in the district. He is assisted by 3 experts designated as Subject Matter Specialists, one of whom is for plant protection and allied issues, one is for intensive agricultural area programme and miscellaneous agronomical schemes and the third is for farms and related matters. The Subject Matter Specialist for plant protection is assisted by two Field Assistants, one Field Man, one Mechanic and one Mechanical Mate to look after plant protection schemes, maintenance and repair of plant protection equipments etc. The Subdivisional Agricultural Officer also assists the P.E.O. and the Subject Matter Specialists in the execution of different agricultural schemes. The P.E.O. is further helped by one Manure Development Officer, one Fruit Development Officer and one Jute Development Inspector. For the execution of small irrigation schemes, the P.E.O. is assisted by one Engineering Overseer, one Sub-Assistant Engineer and two Surveyors. There are besides two Agricultural Overseers for maintenance of seed stores, one for field work relating to sugarcane development and another for improvement of cashewnut cultivation. Two Agricultural Demonstrators are engaged in field work relating to town compost schemes.

Of the 22 Blocks in the district, 12 are covered by the intensive cultivation programme. In each such Block there is an Agricultural Extension Officer who is assisted by two Assistant Agricultural Demonstrators for supervising the work of the demonstration centres. There are in all 50 Village-Level Workers in the district who help the Agricultural Extension Officers and the Assistant Agricultural Extension Officers in the implementation of agricultural schemes within their respective charges. In each of the Blocks not covered by the intensive cultivation programme, there is an Agricultural Extension Officer and an Assistant Agricultural Extension Officer besides one Agricultural Demonstrator and a Fitter Mechanic. The first two look after agricultural schemes, the third supervises the demonstration centres while the last is in charge of the Block workshop.

The District Seed Farm at Susunia, which is one of the biggest of its kind in the State, employs a Farm Manager who is assisted by two Agricultural Overseers and two Agricultural Demonstrators. Besides a mechanic to look after the pumping plants and other machinery, there are six tractor drivers, five tractor mates and eight cattle keepers. The State Agricultural Farm at Bankura has a Farm Manager and an Agricultural Demonstrator. Eight Blocks out of the twenty-two in the district have Block Seed Farms, each of which is run by an Assistant Farm Manager. The total expenditure incurred during 1965-66 on all the agricultural establishments in the district was Rs. 16,01,171.

Agri-irrigation engineering

The Executive Engineer, Agri-Irrigation, Western Division, is in overall charge of execution of agri-irrigational schemes in the district. Of the two Assistant Engineers under him, one is engaged in commissioning deep tube-wells while the other looks after civil engineering constructions. The sanctioned technical staff consists of a Supervisor, an Estimator, a Senior Mechanic, three Sub-Assistant Engineers, two Surveyors and a few other inferior employees. The total establishment expenditure for this organization during 1964-65 was Rs. 90,104.

Agri-mechanical engineering

To execute all agricultural-cum-mechanical works in the district, there is an Assistant Engineer (Agri-Mechanical) who works under the Executive Engineer (Agri-Mechanical), Bankura Division and is assisted by two Sub-Assistant Engineers.

Soil conservation (Agronomy)

The Soil Conservation Officer (Agronomy) with headquarters at Bankura town has jurisdiction over Purulia, Midnapur and Bankura districts. There is an Assistant Soil Conservation Officer under him who works for Bankura district alone. Soil correlation, interpretation and planning and supervision of soil surveys are his duties in which he is assisted by two Engineering Surveyors.

Soil conservation (Extension)

There is one Soil Conservation Officer with headquarters at Bankura to look after all soil conservation (extension and demonstration) works and cashewnut plantations. Under him are three Assistant Soil Conservation Officers, one of whom holds jurisdiction over Chhatna, Saltora, Barjora, Gangajalghati, Onda and Mejia police stations, the second looks after Bankura, Indpur, Taldangra, Simlapal, Raipur, Khatra and Ranibandh police stations, while the third is in charge of the entire Vishnupur subdivision. Other technical personnel consist of a number of Sub-Assistant Engineers, Engineering Surveyors, Agricultural Supervisors etc. The total establishment expenditure for running this organization during 1964-65 amounted to Rs. 86,532.

Veterinary administration

The District Veterinary Officer, having jurisdiction over the whole of the district, is in overall charge of the veterinary administration. The Veterinary Inspector under him, who is in charge of the State Veterinary Hospital at Bankura, has jurisdiction over the Bankura municipal area and treats cases at the hospital, controls livestock epidemics within the town, examines pathological specimens sent by mofussil staff and his own and stores biological products for the field staff. The Stationary Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Vishnupur holds jurisdiction over the Vishnupur municipal area and performs duties similar to those of the Veterinary Inspector at Bankura. An Itinerant Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Bankura functions within the Bankura and Chhatna police stations and is responsible for controlling cattle epidemics and performing mass vaccinations in his area with the assistance of two Veterinary Field Assistants. The Itinerant Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Khatra, having jurisdiction over

Khatra and Indpur police stations and his counterpart at Vishnupur exercising jurisdiction over the Vishnupur police station minus the municipal area, discharge, with the help of Field Assistants, exactly similar duties within their respective ranges. There are besides 15 Verterinary Assistant Surgeons working in the 15 Development Blocks in the district, namely Sonamukhi, Patrasayer, Indas. Kotulpur, Joypur, Barjora, Gangajalghati, Mejia, Saltora, Onda, Ranibandh, Taldangra, Simlapal, Raipur (I) and Raipur (II), each of whom is assisted by two Veterinary Field Assistants for controlling livestock epidemics and dispensing medicines etc. In each of these Blocks there is an Aid Centre, manned by a Veterinary Field Assistant, for treating general cases and for enlightening villagers in the neighbourhood in veterinary matters.

Damodar Irrigation Division

Under an Executive Engineer, in charge of the Damodar Irrigation Division, there are 5 Assistant Engineers and 21 Sub-Assistant Engineers for execution and supervision of works falling within the Bankura district as also for preparation of estimates and bills etc. They are assisted by technical personnel like estimators, draftsmen, tracers and surveyors, besides the usual clerical staff.

Kangsabati Project

Except the Damodar Valley Project, the Kangsabati Project is so far the largest of its kind in West Bengal. A Chief Executive Engineer is in overall charge of the scheme with headquarters at Bankura town. He is assisted by 7 Executive Engineers, one each for the Kangsabati Circle Office, Kangsabati Designs Division, Bankura Irrigation Division, Kangsabati Mechanical Division, Kangsabati Left Bank Division, Kangsabati Canal Divisions No. II & III. The Kangsabati Circle Officer employs 2 Assistant Engineers, 5 Sub-Assistant Engineers, 16 Surveyors, 2 Draftsmen, 4 Soil Analysts and one Tracer, besides the usual complement of non-technical staff. Kangsabati Designs Division has 4 Assistant Engineers, 9 Sub-Assistant Engineers, 6 Draftsmen and 2 Tracers in addition to clerical and other personnel. Bankura Irrigation Division engages 3 Assistant Engineers, 12 Sub-Assistant Engineers, two Surveyors, one Draftsman and a Tracer as also clerks and others. Kangsabati Mechanical Division has 6 Assistant Engineers and 19 Sub-Assistant Engineers, besides the usual complement of technical and non-technical staff. Kangsabati Left Bank Division has 4 Assistant Engineers, 19 Sub-Assistant Engineers, one Medical Officer and usual clerical and technical personnel. Kangsabati Canals Division II has 4 Assistant Engineers and 20 Sub-Assistant Engineers while Kangsabati Canals Division No. III has 2 Assistant Engineers and 8 Sub-Assistant Engineers over and above the normal strength of technical and clerical staff.

Fishery administration

The District Fishery Officer is responsible for implementing schemes of his Department in the district. He is to sanction, draw and disburse loans under various projects relating to the development

of pisciculture and to recover the same and deposit the proceeds into the treasury and keep accounts thereof. He also advises pisciculturists about the procedure to be followed. There are two Assistant Fishery Officers under him, one for each subdivision, who are assisted by a Fishery Sub-Overseer each. The total establishment costs incurred by the set-up during 1964-65 amounted to Rs. 26,285.

Forest administration

The Divisional Forest Officer in charge of the Bankura Forest Division has his headquarters in Bankura town and is responsible for forestry work in a few other districts besides Bankura. He is assisted by one Additional Divisional Forest Officer, one Assistant Divisional Forest Officer and two Assistant Forest Officers. The 18 Forest Rangers and 94 Deputy Forest Rangers posted in the district realize Government revenues and supervise the work in their respective ranges. Laying out of plantations and protection of forests also comes within the scope of their duties. In the latter sphere they are assisted by 242 Forest Guards who keep watch over the forests in Bankura. The establishment includes the usual complement of clerical and menial staff and it incurred a total expenditure of Rs. 18,77,182 during 1964-65.

Co-operative administration

The co-operative administration in the district is headed by an Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies who is assisted in his duties by an Executive Officer and *ex-officio* Assistant Registrar whose primary task is to look after the work of wholesale consumers' socities organized in the district under a centrally sponsored Government scheme. Other officers helping him include the District Auditor of Co-operative Societies, who supervises statutory audit of co-operative societies and a Development Officer who looks after all development works under the various development schemes. There are besides 27 Co-operative Inspectors, 15 of whom work in the Block areas, 3 look after the moribund co-operative societies, one is for supervision and organization of labour co-operatives, one for similar duties relating to farming societies, one for land mortgage banks, two for supervising important societies having a capital of Rs. 50,000 or more, one for helping the Executive Officer and the remaining three for the three important circles. There are besides 28 Auditors, a Marketing Inspector, a Co-operative Industrial Squad and the usual complement of office staff. The total establishment costs during 1964-65 amounted to Rs. 22,01,191.

Industrial administration

The District Industrial Officer, working under the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal, looks after matters relating to industrial development in the district. One Investigator assists him regarding the loans advanced under the State Aid to Industries Act and another in matters of rehabilitation of displaced goldsmiths. There is an Assistant Inspector to process the applications for registration of firms with

the Directorate of Industries, West Bengal. The organization incurred an establishment expenditure of Rs. 21,729 during 1964-65.

Public Works administration

An Executive Engineer is in charge of public works administration in the Bankura Division which includes some other districts besides Bankura. He is responsible for the execution and maintenance of all public works within his division and has to inspect, at least once a year, the important Government buildings falling under his care. Prevention of encroachment on Government lands also forms a part of his duties. The strong rooms of the Treasury and Sub-Treasury are also inspected by him annually. The Executive Engineer is required to inspect, at least once a year, and suggest measures for the protection of such public monuments or buildings of architectural or historical interest as may need them. He is assisted in his technical work by 3 Assistant Engineers, 9 Sub-Assistant Engineers and a number of technical and non-technical staff. The establishment expenditure for this set-up was Rs. 1,26,464 in 1964-65.

Roads administration

Administration of roads in the district (along with those in Purulia and a part of Burdwan) is the responsibility of an Executive Engineer under the Public Works (Roads) Department who is assisted by 2 Assistant and 7 Sub-Assistant Engineers, besides the usual complement of clerical and technical personnel including work-charged staff. The expenditure incurred by the Bankura wing of this establishment during 1964-65 was Rs. 2,98,738.

Electrical administration

There is a Sub-Assistant Engineer stationed at Bankura who is responsible to the Executive Engineer of the Western Electrical Division under the Public Works Directorate, for supervision and maintenance of electrical installations in Government buildings in the district. He is assisted by one Senior Work Assistant, 2 Junior Work Assistants and other technical and clerical personnel. The total expenditure during 1964-65 for electrical works in various Government buildings in the district was Rs. 1,28,000 approximately.

Construction Board

There is an Assistant Engineer in charge of the Bankura subdivision of the Construction Board who is assisted by 3 Sub-Assistant Engineers directly responsible for supervision of constructional works handled by the Board.

Rural water supply administration

An Assistant Engineer, who is responsible to the Executive Engineer, Rural Water Supply, Burdwan Division under the Public Health Engineering Directorate, is in charge of the Bankura Engineering subdivision which covers the entire district for the purpose of rural water supply. The Assistant Engineer is assisted by 2 Sub-Assistant Engineers one for each of the two civil subdivisions of the district. There are in all 3 Sub-Overseers, 2 Work Assistants and other technical staff for the supervision and maintenance of tube-wells. The establishment entailed an expenditure of Rs. 71,741 during 1964-65.

School administration

The District Inspector of Schools, Bankura is required to supervise all Secondary schools including Senior Basic, Junior Basic and

Primary schools within the district. He also functions as the Secretary of the District School Board and thus maintains a liaison between all branches of school administration in the district. Two Assistant Inspectors of Schools help him in the supervision and organization of Senior Basic and Junior High schools and another Assistant Inspector assists him in the discharge of his duties as Secretary, District School Board and in all matters relating to assessment, collection and deposit of education tax in the district. A Senior Technical Assistant, helped by a Junior Technical Assistant, compiles statistics in connexion with the progress of education in the district. The District Survey Officer conducts educational surveys whenever needed. The eight Deputy Assistant Inspectors of Schools are directly responsible for supervision of Senior Basic, Junior Basic, Primary and Pre-Basic (Nursery) schools in the district. They are assisted in their duties by 16 Sub-Inspectors of Schools. There are 3 Music Instructors for popularizing poet Tagore's songs in the rural areas. The establishment expenditure incurred by this unit during 1964-65 was Rs. 1,79,674. Women's education in the district is looked after by a District Inspectress of Schools having her headquarters at Midnapur and jurisdiction over Purulia and Midnapur districts as well.

Physical education and youth welfare

The District Officer for Physical Education and Youth Welfare is responsible for planning, organization and supervision of physical activities in all kinds of educational institutions, youth clubs and associations in the district. He also acts as the Secretary of the District Youth Welfare Council and is a member of the District School Sports Association. Besides conducting training of teachers, club leaders and school boys on specific courses of games and sports, he is responsible for the organization and management of A.C.C. activities in secondary schools. A District Organizer of Physical Education helps him in his various activities. The establishment costs incurred by this set-up during 1964-65 were Rs. 1,14,782.

Social education

The District Social Education Officer, Bankura is responsible for executing social educational programmes launched by the Community Development Branch of the Agriculture Department in collaboration with the Education Department. Establishment and organization of social education centres, adult education centres, libraries, youth clubs, *bratidals*, folk recreational institutions etc. come within the purview of his functions. He organizes sports and games, fairs and cultural functions and is actively connected with programmes relating to eradication of illiteracy. A Social Education Organizer and a Mukhya Sevikā posted in each of the Blocks of the district function under his general guidance. This set-up spent Rs. 13,645 during 1964-65 as establishment expenditure.

State Welfare Home

The Bankura State Welfare Home, located at Pāthardāngā, a village 3 miles west of Bankura railway station, is an institution run by

the Education Department for the welfare of indigent orphans. It can accommodate 150 orphans and is managed by a local committee of which the District Magistrate is the President and the District Social Education Officer the Secretary. (For further details about this organization, see relevant entry in Chapter XV).

Information & Public Relations administration

The District Information Officer with headquarters at Bankura is responsible for all Government publicity in the district. He supervises and guides the work of the district audio-visual unit (35 mm. cinema unit), the light audio-visual unit (16 mm. cinema unit) and the medical section attached to the former. He is assisted by two Subdivisional Information Officers, one at Vishnupur and the other at Bankura, the latter also functioning as the officer in charge of the District Information Centre at Bankura. There are technical personnel in the establishment for manning the audio-visual units. A Medical Officer and a compounder are attached to the district audio-visual unit and they treat patients at different camps in the district. The organization incurred an establishment expenditure of Rs. 48,998 during 1964-65.

Weights and Measures

The Assistant Controller of Weights and Measures, Bankura exercises jurisdiction also over the neighbouring district of Purulia. His headquarters is, however, at Bankura town. Two Inspectors work under him in Bankura district and they are stationed at Bankura and Vishnupur and hold jurisdiction over the respective subdivisions. The establishment is entrusted with the task of popularizing the metric system of measures among the masses and enforcing the provisions of the relevant law. Inspection of shops and establishments with a view to finding out infringements of the Weights and Measures Act and prosecution of offenders form an important part of their duties. The establishment expenditure incurred by the unit was small, being only Rs. 16,542 during 1965-66.

Commercial tax administration

There is a Commercial Tax Officer at Bankura who is assisted by an Inspector and a small office staff. His duties include the enforcement of the provisions of the Bengal Finance (Sales Tax) Act, the Bengal Motor Spirits Sales Tax Act and the Bengal Raw Jute Taxation Act—all of 1941—and the West Bengal Sales Tax Act of 1954 and the Central Sales Tax Act of 1956 and collection of revenues realizable under them. During 1964-65, this unit collected Rs. 15,27,065 by way of various taxes against a collection charge of Rs. 33,110 only.

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SET-UP

Postal administration

The Bankura Postal Division, with headquarters at Bankura, comprises the neighbouring civil districts of Bankura and Purulia. The Divisional Superintendent of Post Offices, stationed at Bankura, is assisted by 2 Subdivisional Inspectors with headquarters at Bankura and Vishnupur respectively. The Head Post Office in Bankura town functions as a nucleus organization controlling the accounts

of 26 sub-offices and 225 branch offices functioning in the district. The Head Postmaster is in the higher selection grade and the Sub-Postmaster in charge of the sub-office at Vishnupur is in the lower selection grade. The remaining sub-offices, numbering 25, are under time-scale officers while the branch offices in the rural areas, numbering 225, are manned by extra-departmental Branch Postmasters. The departmental and extra-departmental delivery staff in the district number 271.

Savings organization

The District Savings Organizer with the help of 63 Agents (as on 31.3.62) is responsible for implementation of the National Savings Scheme in the district. He works in close co-operation with the Block Development Officers, the Anchal Pradhāns, Adhyakshyas of Grām Panchayats, school teachers and other respectable members of the community. Such contacts enable him to select the right men as Agents. There is a District Savings Committee to guide the activities of this organization.[1]

STATUTORY BODIES

Life Insurance Corporation of India

Having jurisdiction over the district, the branch office of the Life Insurance Corporation of India at Bankura was headed, during 1965-66, by a Branch Manager, assisted by one Assistant Branch Manager, 13 Development Officers and 21 ministerial staff. There were besides 8 inferior staff.[2]

[1] Operational statistics of this organization have been given in Chapter VI.
[2] Figures of insurance business handled by this office have been given in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER X

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

History of land revenue assessment and management

The Malla rulers of Vishnupur held undisputed sway over their territories till the conquest of Bengal by Akbar. As has been described earlier in the chapter on History, it was Dhār Hāmbir, the forty-ninth prince of the line, who acknowledged, for the first time, the suzerainty of the Emperor of Delhi by paying him an annual *peskāsh* or tribute of Rs. 1,07,000. Apart from this, the position of the Vishnupur rajas, as the hereditary local chieftains, was not otherwise disturbed. Even during the viceroyalty of Murshid Quli Khan, the raja of Vishnupur succeeded in retaining his quasi-independence but lost the erstwhile status of a subordinate chieftain inasmuch as his lands were settled afresh with him on a zemindari tenure. Instead of paying the annual *peskāsh* the raja of Vishnupur had now to pay land revenue like other zeminders. This change in the character of the right in the land under the Vishnupur Raj took place during the reign of Gopal Singh (1730-1745 A.D.).[1]

With the grant of the *Diwāni* in 1765, the Vishnupur territories came under the suzerainty of the East India Company. It has already been shown in the chapter on History how Chaitanya Singh, the ruler at the time, had to submit to repeated enhancements of land revenue for fear of losing his estate. In fact, the assessment of Rs. 4,00,000 as annual revenue was forced upon him at the time of the Decennial Settlement. In 1789 Hesilrige, an "assistant on deputation" to Vishnupur, was authorized to take charge of the collection of the district with a view to discover the real resources of the zemindari. He was also ordered to enquire into and resume all *chākrān* lands and all invalid *lākherāj* grants. Under his *khās* management the total collections of the estate, including the balance of that year subsequently recovered, amounted to Rs. 4,19,539 only. After deduction of one-eleventh of this sum on account of *mālikānā*, the net appropriation came to Rs. 3,81,399.[2]

F. W. Robertson, the Settlement Officer in Bankura for the 1917-24 Settlement operations, has stated that "this settlement of the Bishnupur pargana is an illustration of the injustices which were so often perpetrated at the time of the Decennial Settlement and the folly of making that settlement permanent. It is not at first sight

[1] F. W. Robertson: Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura (1917-1924). Calcutta, 1926. p. 28.
[2] ibid. p. 33.

very clear why an assessment higher than what the *khas* collections of Mr. Hesilrige had warranted should have been imposed upon the estate especially when we consider that certain assets (e.g., *Sair* collections) which had formed part of the *khas* collections referred to before, had since been abolished by the Regulations of Government and the zemindar was no longer authorised to collect them. The value of these abolished assets was subsequently estimated in 1794 by the Collector, Mr. Davis, to amount to over Rs. 10,000. There is, however, reason to believe that the Board of Revenue, when approving the assessment took into account 'the latent resources of the estate' as disclosed by the enquiries made during the period of management of Mr. Hesilrige. These 'latent resources' consisted in the power to resume all *chakran*, *jaigir* and invalid *lakheraj* grants and to settle them at full pargana rates.

"That these resources were considerable admits of no doubt, though the value of many was conjectural, but they were almost without exception of a nature which could not be rendered immediately productive as assets. Seeing that Mr. Hesilrige, with all the support of the Government behind him, had been unable to render them so, they could at best be considered as authorising a gradual and not immediate increase on the *jama* estimated from the *khas* collections. The conclusion is inevitable that not only was the Decennial Settlement assessment of the pargana Bishnupur unfair, but to make it permanent deprived Government for ever of the additional resources which, to the knowledge of Government, existed and which time and good management could not fail to make productive."[1]

It was, therefore, not surprising that Chaitanya Singh failed to clear his dues at the end of the first year of the Decennial Settlement. In 1791 the *mahāls* of Bārahāzāri and Karisundā were sold under the orders of the Board of Revenue for realization of the arrear dues from him and were purchased by Maharaja Tej Chānd of Burdwan, the revenue being fixed at Rs. 2,14,147.[2] Chaitanya Singh was left with a *jamā* of Rs. 1,85,853 (this amount appears to have been over-assessed as the portion sold was under-assessed), and when he failed to make due payment, C. Keating, the then Collector of Birbhum, again attached the zemindari next year and appointed one Jivanlāl as *sezāwāl* to collect the rents, giving him instructions to resume the *chākrān* and invalid *lākherāj* grants as well.[3] The wrong done to Chaitanya Singh was, however, righted in 1795 when the Board of Revenue ordered the accumulated balance to be written off and the revenue payable by him was reduced to Rs. 1,50,271.[4] Chaitanya Singh's long-drawn dispute with his younger

[1] ibid. pp. 33-34.
[2] ibid p. 34.
[3] loc. cit.
[4] ibid. p. 35.

brother Dāmodar Singh, however, prevented him from fully clearing even these diminished dues. The family feud dragged on for years to finally end by a decision of the Governor-General in Council in 1791 that Chaitanya Singh and Dāmodar Singh were coparceners of the inheritance. Against this decision Chaitanya Singh appealed to the *Diwāni Adālat* at Birbhum and finally managed to obtain the bulk of the property in 1794 when he was an old and almost ruined man.[1] The Vishnupur Raj ceased to exist in 1805 when the entire remaining portion of the estate was put to sale to satisfy an arrear demand of Rs. 1,87,916, and as it appeared unlikely that any individual would pay such a huge amount, it was resumed by the Government. In 1806, however, the estate was purchased by the Maharaja of Burdwan for Rs. 2,15,000.[2]

Besides the Vishnupur estate, the lands under the Rāipur, Phulkusmā and Simlāpāl Raj came into the possession of the East India Company along with the district of Burdwan and the zemindars of these places were obliged to pay their revenues at Burdwan through the zemindar of Bagri.[3] These, together with Chhātnā, Ambikānagar, Supur, Shyāmsundarpur and Bhelāidihā in the district of Bankura were included in the Jungle Mahāl. At the time of the Decennial Settlement, these estates consisted largely of forests and little or nothing was known about their resources. When the Jungle Mahāl came under the operation of the ordinary revenue laws, the change-over inevitably resulted in the sale of the zemindaris and the ruin of the old princely families.[4] Supur was the first of the *mahāls* to go. The zemindar had borrowed money which he was unable to pay and the decree-holder, a widow of the Goswāmi family of Serampore, moved the court to have the property sold in execution of the decree. Dalton, who was then the Deputy Commissioner, divided the zemindari into nine *tarafs* or parts. namely Supur, Kundi, Indpur, Masiārā, Lohāṭ, Kulāṭ, Bheduā, Harendrabani and Lālbāzār. The last five were sold in execution of the decree in 1878. A portion of the zemindari was thus saved and the descendants of the zemindar of Supur, holding on to the other four *tarafs*, came to be known as the rajas of Khatra. The Ambikānagar estate was sold in 1889 in execution of a mortgage decree and the Shyāmsundarpur zemindari followed in its wake in the same year for arrears of cess. The zemindari of Rāipur was sold in 1913 in execution of a mortgage decree and Phulkusmā, the last of the estates, was sold in 1915 in execution of a money decree and was purchased by the creditor.[5] Following is a complete list of estates on which revenue was assessed at the time of the

[1] Ibid. p. 31.
[2] Ibid. p. 36.
[3] See chapter on History.
[4] F. W. Robertson—op. cit. p. 37.
[5] loc. cit.

Permanent Settlement, showing their respective areas and revenue demands.[1]

ESTATES FORMED OUT OF THE VISHNUPUR ZEMINDARI

Tauzi No.	Name of Estate	Area in acres	Revenue Rs. as. p.
1	Bishnupur (purchased by the Maharaja of Burdwan in 1806)	2,06,471.5	1,35,989 6 5
2	Barahazari (purchased by the Maharaja of Burdwan in 1791)	1,31,943.5	1,92,633 6 9
3	Karisunda (purchased by the Maharaja of Burdwan in 1791)	13,129	23,395 5 0
4	Jungle Mahal (purchased by the Maharaja of Burdwan in 1788)	1,22,354.5	3,499 4 6
5	Kuchiakole (purchased by Nemai Singh, son of Raja Chaitanya Singh in 1798)	8,542.5	8,237 10 0
6	Panchal (purchased in 1798)	493	408 9 9
7	Jamtora (purchased in 1798)	9,575.5	6,310 9 6
8	Maliara (separated from the main estate and created an independent *taluk* by order of the Board of Revenue)	32,043.5	5,202 8 9
9	Saharjora (created an independent *taluk* by order of the Board of Revenue)	16,623	3,110 0 5
10	Kismat Saharjora	4,665	1,156 10 3

JUNGLE MAHAL

Tauzi No.	Name of Estate	Area in acres	Revenue Rs. as. p.
938	Chhatna or Samantabhum	1,40,194	731 7 10
990	Bhelaidiha	25,781.5	524 2 3
991	Phulkusma	35,763.5	212 9 8
992	Shyamsundarpur	88,100	247 10 7
993	Simlapal	48,712.5	759 13 8
994	Ambikanagar	85,261	372 14 0
995	Raipur	79,362.5	2,657 13 9

In addition to these estates there was the Parganā Mohisārā comprising almost the whole of the Saltora and Mejia thanas and

[1] ibid. p. 38. (The table is reproduced from Robertson's Report).

extending over an area of 1,15,796 acres which belonged to the Pānchet zemindari and the revenue of which was paid into the Manbhum Collectorate.

The revenue assessed in the district at the time of the Permanent Settlement was Rs. 3,87,206 as compared with a permanently settled revenue of Rs. 4,86,723 in 1917-24.[1] The increase in land revenue that took place after the Permanent Settlement was due to four reasons, namely resumption and assessment to revenue of lands held without payment of revenue under an invalid title, resumption and assessment to revenue of lands formerly held free of assessment in consideration of performance of certain police duties by the persons holding them, resumption and assessment to revenue of lands newly formed after the Permanent Settlement in the beds of rivers and purchase by Government of estates sold for arrears of revenue.[2] It may be recalled that Bir Hāmbir and some of the succeeding Malla rulers, notably Gopāl Singh and Chaitanya Singh, had granted lands free of rent to many Brahmins and Vaishnavas for religious purposes. In fact, such charity was so widely practised that it was a common saying in Vishnupur at that time that a Brahmin who did not hold rent-free land was not a true Brahmin. It has been mentioned in the chapter on History that Chaitanya Singh's son and grandsons also issued many *lākherāj* grants after the Decennial Settlement in a last bid to save at least a part of their ancestral property. Some invalid *lākherāj* grants were resumed by Hesilrige and some were resumed subsequently by the *sezāwāl* Jivanlāl. From 1800 onwards, covenanted civilians, designated "Commissioner of Vishnupur", were appointed to manage the Vishnupur estate and one of their most important duties was to resume invalid *lākherāj* grants. Charles Blunt, Commissioner of Vishnupur, estimated in 1801 that the annual value of the resumable *lākherāj* grants in that portion of Vishnupur which was committed to his charge was Rs. 40,000. The major part of the resumption, however, started in 1835 when the Government appointed Taylor, a special Deputy Collector, for speeding up the work. The resumption proceedings gave rise to much popular discontent. It was also felt that where the area was small, the addition to the revenue did not compensate for the cost of the proceedings. Accordingly, in January 1841, it was decided that no proceedings were to be started in any village where the area under *lākherāj* grant was less than 50 *bighās*. Lands actually under cultivation were alone measured and assessed and no account was taken of waste lands and jungle tracts. The resumed *lākherāj* lands were ordinarily settled with the persons in possession on the basis of one-half of the gross amount assessed. Sometimes an additional 10 per cent was

[1] loc. cit.
[2] Ibid. p. 39.

allowed to the proprietors by way of collection charges. During the Settlement operations of 1917-24 it was at first proposed to assess to revenue all invalid *lākherāj* grants which had till then escaped resumption. But eventually a principle was laid down that no action was to be taken about a *lākherāj* grant if it could be held that Government had knowledge of the existence of the grant but had not resumed it for 80 years. Along with *lākherāj* land, some lands covered by *āymā* grants (a form of grant for Islamic religious purposes) were also resumed during the great resumption proceedings of 1841.

Proceedings for the resumption of lands formerly held free of assessment in consideration of the performance of police duties by persons who held them were conducted in the Bankura district in respect of *ghāṭwāli* and *simāndāri* lands. The *ghāṭwāls* of Bankura were persons responsible for defending the *ghāṭs* or hill passes against external aggression besides performance of ordinary police duties. In Bankura each *ghāṭ* "formed a separate and distinct unit in charge of a *sardar* or headman and under him a varying number of *sadials* and *tabedars*. In point of rank the *sardar* may be likened to the *jemadar*, the *sadial* to the *daffadar*, and the *tabedar* to the ordinary sepoy. In return for performing police duties the *ghatwals* of each *ghat* had lands assigned to them either free of rent or on payment of a small quit rent (*panchak*)."[1] Originally, the *ghāṭwāli* system was feudal in character, the *sardār ghāṭwāl* holding his lands from the raja, the *sadiāl* from the *sardār* and the *tābedār* from the *sadiāl*. After the Permanent Settlement, however, the superintendence over the police as well as the power to appoint and dismiss individual *ghāṭwāls* devolved on the Magistrate-Collector of the district. The feudal moorings of the system were thus severed, and with very few exceptions, a practice came to be introduced for each *ghāṭwāl*, be he *sardār*, *sadiāl* or *tābedār*, to pay his *panchak* direct to the zemindar, just as he received his grant of lands direct from the Magistrate-Collector. It is likely that originally the *ghāṭwāli* right was not inheritable but in course of time it became so. The *ghāṭwāls* by virtue of their status as police officers exercised considerable power and influence in their localities.[2]

Under Regulation No. XVIII of 1805, which created the district of Jungle Mahāl, the rural police was placed under the zemindars who controlled them through the *ghāṭwāls*. During the first century following the creation of the Jungle Mahāl district, appointments to the posts of *ghāṭwāls* were always made by the Magistrate-Collector who issued the *sanads* to the incumbents. In making appointments, the heirs of deserving *ghāṭwāls* were usually preferred. There were, however, occasions in the 19th century when the right of the

[1] ibid. p. 43.
[2] ibid. p. 44.

Magistrate-Collector to dismiss *ghāṭwāls* was judicially challenged and the courts reversed the executive decisions and reinstated the *ghāṭwāls* in their tenures. But in 1878, in a case instituted by one Peran Singh, a *sardār ghāṭwāl*, who had been dismissed, the High Court ruled that a *ghāṭwāl* could be dismissed by the Magistrate-Collector and that the dismissal entailed forfeiture of the *ghāṭwāli* lands as well. *Ghāṭwāls* were required to perform general police duties assigned to them and to collect and communicate intelligence affecting the public peace. They were also expected to prevent commission of offences and bring the offenders to justice. Patrolling strategic roads, escorting travellers and carrying the official *dāk* also formed a part of their duties. It was, however, found in actual practice that satisfactory discharge of such multifarious duties could not be expected from a *ghāṭwāl* as his occupation was mainly agricultural and as he could not be employed at a place away from his *ghāṭwāli* lands.[1]

Information about the extent of lands held by the *ghāṭwāls* as also about the total amount of *panchak* payable by them was not very accurate in the beginning of the 19th century. *Ghāṭwāli* lands engaged the attention of Charles Blunt, the Commissioner of Vishnupur, at whose instance the raja of Vishnupur agreed to part with his lands covered by *ghāṭwāli* tenures on condition that his revenue is reduced by the amount of the *panchak* receivable by him from the *ghāṭwāls*; that, should the *ghāṭwāli* establishments be abolished or resumed at any time, the lands should be re-annexed to his zemindari and that he be exempted from paying the balance of revenue due from the *ghāṭwāli mahāls* which had accumulated since his estate had been under attachment.[2] This arrangement concerned only that portion of the Vishnupur zemindari which was at that time owned by the raja of Vishnupur. In 1802 Charles Blunt prepared a report on the *ghāṭwāli* lands within the Vishnupur estate in which he showed the number of *ghāṭs* paying *panchak* to the raja as 43, the number of *ghāṭwāls* employed as 2,299, the area of the land as 35,282 *bighās*, and the *panchak* payable as Rs. 4,690-12-7 pies. The *ghāṭs* that were separated from the estate of the raja were thereafter known as *Sarkāri Panchaki Ghāṭs*. The *Ghāṭs* in other parts of the district continued to pay rent to the zemindar and were known as *Simāndāri Panchaki Ghāṭs*. There were eleven *ghāṭs* which paid no *panchak* at all and they were known as *Bepanchaki Ghāṭs*. With the passage of time it was found increasingly difficult to work the *ghāṭwāli* system. The *ghāṭwāls* also began to be involved in litigations with their neighbours and money-lenders as also with the zemindars in the course of which some of them had to part with their lands. The Government could not remain a passive spectator of such transfer of the *ghāṭwāli* holdings

[1] Ibid. p. 45.
[2] ibid. p. 47.

to outsiders and with a view to assessing the actual extent of *ghāṭwāli* lands a survey was decided upon.[1] Tarak Nath Ghose, Deputy Collector, was ordered in June 1850 to effect a detailed measurement of the *ghāṭwāli* lands.[2] He surveyed only a portion of the *Sarkāri Panchaki Ghāṭwāli* lands and calculated the area to be 85,000 *bighās*, but the survey was dropped on account of its inaccuracy as also because of the innumerable claims advanced during the progress of the operations. According to a revenue survey undertaken subsequently, 1,36,536 *bighās* were measured as *Sarkāri Panchaki*, 2,971 *bighās* as *Bepanchaki* and 1,30,358 *bighās* as Zemindari *Panchaki Ghāṭwāli* land in the Vishnupur pargana alone. It was thus revealed that large parcels of land were being enjoyed by a body of men at a nominal rent or no rent at all for the performance of certain duties which they had not been discharging satisfactorily.

In 1877-78 there was a great increase in crime in the then districts of Manbhum and Bankura, and Baker, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, reported after an enquiry that the work of the *ghāṭwāls* was thoroughly unsatisfactory and that *ghāṭwāli* tenures should be gradually resumed as the posts fell vacant. This report led the Government to decide on a fresh survey of *ghāṭwāli* lands and the work was started in Bankura in July 1880 under the supervision of a special Deputy Collector, Krishna Dayal Singh. But as the survey proceedings gave rise to a crop of litigations, they were stopped in 1884 but towards the close of the year orders were again issued to proceed with them under the superintendence of H. H. Risley. For avoiding litigation Risley proposed that the *chāks* in the *thākbast* maps should be taken as the basis of the new survey and that only the external boundaries of the lands of each *ghāṭ* were to be surveyed, the internal boundaries being left to be settled by the *ghāṭwāls* themselves. So far as the thanas of Chhatna, Simlapal, Raipur and Khatra were concerned, it was decided that the survey of the *ghāṭwāli* lands should proceed according to possession, because at the time of the *thākbast* survey, when these thanas formed part of the Manbhum district, no demarcation had been made of the *ghāṭwāli* lands. The survey was completed on the 30th September 1887 revealing 5,21,700 *bighās* of *ghāṭwāli* land of which 1,69,000 *bighās* were measured as *Sarkāri Panchaki*, 3,50,000 *bighās* as Zemindari *Panchaki* and 2,700 *bighās* as *Bepanchaki* land. Curiously enough, no steps were taken to abolish the *ghāṭwāli* tenures immediately after the survey and it was only in 1894 that Government decided to abolish the *ghāṭwāli* tenures on the complaints of two big landholding interests, Watson & Co. and Gisborne & Co., who held *ijārās* under the Vishnupur and Raipur zemindaries and alleged that the *ghāṭwāls* had been enjoying more lands than they were entitled

[1] ibid. pp. 47-49.
[2] ibid. p. 49.

to. R. C. Dutt, the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division, was then asked to report on the matter and he recommended the liquidation of the *ghāṭwāls* as a police agency on the ground that their services were neither necessary nor satisfactory. He pointed out that action could be taken only after freeing them from the burden of their services through a compromise between the Government, the zemindars and the *ghāṭwāls*. The Government accordingly decided to relieve the *ghāṭwāls* of their duties and to resume and assess their lands which was done at the ordinary local rates but the *ghāṭwāls* were to receive a remission of 25 per cent on the rent in consideration of their long possession of the land. The rent so assessed was to remain fixed for ever and the right in land was to be heritable and transferable. The rents were to be paid to the zemindar who, in his turn, was to pay one-half of them to Government as revenue. It was further decided that the amount of the *panchak*, if any. formerly paid by a *ghāṭwāl* to the zemindar should be deducted from the revenue of the parent estate. In 1894 Jnan Sankar Sen, Deputy Collector, was appointed Settlement Officer to superintend the work. The bulk of the work was finished in 1900, but in the case of some *ghāṭs* the resumption was delayed and was not completed till 1908. All the *ghāṭs* could not, however, be resumed and the final touch to the resumption proceedings was given in the Settlement operations of 1917-24, the results of which as also of the former proceedings are given in the table below.[1]

Number of *ghāṭs* resumed	Area (in acres)	Revenue assessed	*Panchak* originally paid
		Rs. as. p.	Rs. as. p.
43 *Sarkāri Panchaki Ghāṭs*	45,773.9	17,542-10- 0	5,003- 7- 0
174 *Bepanchaki* and Zemindari *Panchaki Ghāṭs*	77,746.9	19,779-11- 2	5,563-10-11
35 *Bepanchaki* and Zemindari *Panchaki Ghāṭs*	22,629 04	6,691- 3- 1	1,874-14-10
Total : 252	1,46,149.84	44,013- 8- 3	12,442- 0- 9

The *simāndāri* tenures, held free of rent in lieu of certain services, probably originated from the custom of entrusting suitable persons with the task of watching the boundary or *simānā* of lands. Such tenures occurred only in the thanas of Indas and Kotulpur in Bankura, the system being peculiar to the district of Burdwan to which these thanas belonged in the past. The *simāndāri* lands were resumed on the terms that they would be assessed at full rates and the *simāndārs*

[1] ibid. p. 53.

given occupancy rights and that the rent asssesed should be payable to the zemindar, one-half of the amount of rent paid being due to the Government as revenue from the zemindar.

Another class of land to be resumed in 1879 was the *sahar tainati chowkidāri chākrān* land held by watchmen appointed long ago by the rajas of Vishnupur for watch and ward duties in the capital city. The total area of such lands was 1,768 *bighās* which were assessed at Rs. 2,130 and settled with the proprietors of the estates to which they belonged, the assessment being payable to the Vishnupur Municipality.[1]

Hunter in his Statistical Account classified the different types of land tenures found in the district into five categories on the basis of a report prepared by Ratan Lal Ghosh, Deputy Collector, in March 1783.[2] They were: (*i*) tenures held directly from Government, (*ii*) intermediate tenures, (*iii*) cultivating tenures, (*iv*) service tenures and (*v*) rent-free tenures. In the first group were included the zemindaris, the independent *tāluks*, the *lākherāj* tenures resumed and settled by Government, the service tenures held at quit rent, the *ghātwāli* tenures and the lands temporarily settled by Government and farmed out. In 1873 there were four estates of which the Government was the proprietor and five temporarily settled estates let out in farm for a period of 30 years. Another type of tenure falling in this category was the *shikmi* tenure. According to Hunter, "there is a class of tenures of a peculiar nature created by Government at the settlement of the resumed *lākherāj* villages. The revenue of *shikmi* estates is paid to Government through the proprietors of the villages in which they are situated. During the investigation which were made into the validity of the rent-free tenures of the district, several villages were discovered to be held under invalid *lākherāj* grants. They were resumed; and in the course of the measurement and assessment of the tenants' holding preliminary to the settlement, several small *lākherāj* holdings were found. These were separately measured and assessed. Their proprietors were called upon to enter into a settlement on the same principle as observed in the settlement of the entire village; half the assets was allowed to them as profits etc. and half as the revenue due to Government. Thus came into existence the *shikmi mahāls*, the revenue of which is paid to Government. But for convenience's sake, the proprietor of the entire *mahāl* was, at the time of the settlement of it, entrusted with the collection of the revenues due from his *shikmidārs* and was allowed 10 per cent on the collections as his remuneration. The status of a *shikmidār* is at present equal to that of a dependent *tālukdār* with transferable and hereditary rights; for in several suits brought by the superior holder for recovery of

[1] ibid. pp. 49-56.
[2] W. W. Hunter—A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV. pp. 251-52.

arrears of rent, it has been held that the relation of landlord and tenant exists between the parties. It is a moot point, however, whether the sale of a *shikmi* for arrear decrees will entitle the purchaser to acquire the tenure free of all encumbrances as in the case of an ordinary under-tenure sold under the rent law; for a *shikmidār* has essentially proprietory rights. The Government revenues paid by the *shikmidārs* are fixed in perpetuity and are not subject to enhancement. *Shikmi* tenures may be found in almost every part of the District; they number 748."[1]

Among the intermediate tenures, Hunter noted the following: (*i*) *patni* taluks with their subordinate tenures called *dar-patni* and *se-patni*, (*ii*) *mukarrari* taluks, (*iii*) *istimrari*, (*iv*) *zār-i-peshgi ijārā* and (*v*) *dar-ijārā*.[2]

It has already been mentioned that the Maharaja of Burdwan purchased in 1806 the entire estate of the raja of Vishnupur subsisting at that time. Prior to that, he had acquired by purchase the estates of Bārahāzāri, Karisundā and Jungle Mahāl. After acquiring all these estates, he created under-tenures known as *patni* taluks similar to those in existence in his main zemindari in Burdwan and other districts. The *patni* tenure was in effect a lease which bound its holder by the same terms and conditions as those by which the superior landlord was bound to the State. By Regulation XLIV of 1793, the proprietor of an estate was allowed to grant lease for a period of ten years but this provision was rescinded by Section 2 of Regulation V of 1812. By Regulation XVIII of the same year, proprietors were declared competent to grant leases for any period, even in perpetuity. In the preamble to Regulation VIII of 1819 it was distinctly mentioned that zemindars were free to grant taluks or other leases of their lands, fixing the rent in perpetuity, at their discretion, subject to the liability of their being annulled, on sale of the lessor's estate for arrears of Government revenue. In pursuance of these Regulations *patni* taluks came into existence also in zemindaris other than the zemindari of Burdwan. A *patni* taluk may be described as a tenure created by the zemindar to be held by the lessee and his heirs for ever at a rent fixed in perpetuity. The *patni* sale law (Regulation VIII of 1819) was a great boon to zemindars who had leased out their estates in *patni* taluks inasmuch as a summary procedure was provided therein for the punctual realization of rent due from the *patnidār*, the Collectors being directed at the instance of the zemindars, to sell, twice a year, *patni* tenures in arrears. The purchaser of an auctioned *patni* taluk obtained it free from all encumbrances which might have been created by the defaulting tenant in violation of the terms of the tenure. By the same Regulation *patni* taluks were declared to be hereditary, transferable and valid

[1] Ibid. pp. 255-56.
[2] Ibid. p. 256.

in perpetuity and *patnidārs* were entitled to create under-tenures in any manner conducive to their interests. The tenures known as *dar-patni* came into existence as a consequence of this permission granted to holders of *patni* taluks to create under-tenures. A *dar-patni* was subordinate to the *patni* tenure and was created by the *patnidār*. It was a tenure in perpetuity, transferable and hereditary and conferred on its holders the same rights and privileges enjoyed by the *patnidār* holding land direct from a zemindar. Section 13 of Regulation VIII of 1819 provided for staying the sale of a *patni* if it was put to sale by the intentional withholding of payment of rent by the *patnidār* with the object of ruining his subordinate tenants. In such a case, the under-tenure holders were allowed to safeguard their interests by paying into the Collector's office the arrear of rent due to the zemindar. *Se-patni*, a *patni* of the third degree and subordinate to a *dar-patni*, was also a taluk, the holder of which had the same rights and privileges as a *dar-patnidār* or a *patnidār*.

According to Hunter, most of the *mukarrari* taluks which had been in existence before the Decennial Settlement were abolished.[1] A number of these tenures was, however, subsequently created by the zemindars or *tālukdārs* and the few that existed at the time to which Hunter's account relates, had definite rights expressed in the written agreements by which they were created. Their rents were not subject to enhancement but they were saleable for arrears. Unless the hereditary nature of the tenure could be inferred from the language used in the lease, a *mukarrari* tenure was considered to be valid only during the life-time of the tenant and was terminable with his death. *Dar-mukarraris* were tenures subordinate to *mukarrari* tenures and were created by the *mukarraridārs*. These tenures were also of a fixed nature and the rights of the tenant were specifically mentioned in a written contract. There were, however, very few *dar-mukarrari* tenures in Bankura at the time when Hunter wrote his account of the district.

Istimrari taluks were not numerous; those found by Hunter were said to have been created by proprietors of estates, subsequent to the Decennial Settlement. The rights and privileges of the *istimraridārs* were exactly similar to those of *mukarraridārs*.

An *ijārā* was a lease granted in respect of a piece of land according to the terms of which a definite amount of rent became payable annually during a specified period. On the expiry of the *ijārā*, no matter for how long it had been in operation, the *ijārādār* was not entitled, *ipso facto*, to its renewal nor could the lessor enhance the rent while the lease remained in force. The *ijārādār* could not also relinquish the lease without the consent of the lessor. A *dar-ijārā* was subordinate to an *ijārā*. The *zār-i-peshgi ijārā* was another

[1] ibid. pp. 258-59.

form of *ijārā* or lease which could be granted for an unspecified term of years and made terminable on certain conditions. Such a lease usually came into existence when a *tālukdār* or tenant mortgaged his estate as a security against a loan making it incumbent that the terms of the lease would expire when the mortgagee recovered the amount of debt and interests from the proceeds of the property.

Hunter found[1] that tenures held by cultivators, which went by the name of *jamā* or *jot*, were generally retained without any written agreement. Such land remained in the possession of one family from generation to generation often without a document of title. By the custom of the district, a ryot, whether resident or non-resident, was allowed to hold lands of this kind undisturbed so long as he paid the rent together with the fixed and occasional *ābwābs* or cesses to his landlord but where his immediately superior landlord was an *ijārādār* with only a temporary lease the relations were less easy. An ordinary *jamā* could only be sold with the permission of the superior intermediary who might refuse to register the name of a purchaser in his records unless the sale took place with his consent or unless it was subsequently ratified by him. This consent or ratification could be secured in two ways; firstly, by payment of a bonus or *selāmi*, and secondly, on recognition of the purchaser's occupation by the zemindar or his agent by receiving rent from him and granting him a receipt. When the *jamā* was ordered to be sold by a civil court in satisfaction of a decree, the purchaser became the ryot whether his name was entered in the zemindar's records or not. Certain other cultivators held lands under what were known as *miādi jamās*. As the meaning of the term implied, a *miādi jamā* could be held for a fixed term of years under a *pāṭṭā* or lease. A cultivator could not relinquish his tenure before his term expired without the consent of his immediate superior tenure-holder nor could the latter enhance the rent or eject the cultivator before the expiry of the lease.

Another kind of right under which cultivators held land at that time was known as *jangalbāri jamā*. When virgin lands were leased out for the purpose of being cleared of jungle and brought under cultivation, the tenure was known by this name. Such lands were generally assessed at progressive rates of rent, payable after a certain number of years during which no rent was paid. The rights of these cultivators were of a permanent and fixed nature.

Some of the cultivators held lands under leases which went by the names of *mukarrari* and *maurusi*, the chief stipulations of which were that the rent was subject neither to enhancement nor to abatement and that the tenures descended from father to son. *Selāmi* or bonus had to be paid by the tenant at the time of the creation of these

[1] ibid. p. 260.

jamās. Some cultivators, however, held lands under *mukarrari* right only, i.e. in terms of a definte lease but without the right of heritability whereas *maurusi* tenures were inheritable. When a lease created a *jamā* transmissible to the children and grandchildren of the lessee but at the same time reserved the grantor's right to assess any land that might after the execution of the lease be found in excess of the specified area, the *jamā* was known as simple *maurusi* one.

The right enjoyed by a person holding land under a ryot was called *korfā*. The chief peculiarity of this tenure was that its holder, although he was the cultivator of the land, did not acquire a right of occupancy by dint of his occupation. *Korfā* tenancies were generally created verbally.

Bhāg jot was the arrangement under which the tenant had the use of the husbandman's land for a year or a season and paid as rent a certain share, usually one-half, of the produce of the land. Besides the *ghāṭwāli* lands, the following service tenures obtained in the Vishnupur pargana in 1845 conferring on the beneficiaries the right to enjoy the proceeds of certain lands in lieu of specified duties. *Senāpati mahāl* covered the lands that were assigned for the support of the commanding officers of the army. *Mahāl-berā mahāl* represented lands assigned to the guards of Vishnupur. *Chharidhāri mahāl* implied the lands enjoyed by the raja's mace-bearers. *Bakshi mahāl* denoted the lands given to the *bakshis* or paymasters. *Krot mahāl* signified lands enjoyed by the court officials of the raja, such as dewan, etc. *Top-khānā mahāl* constituted lands intended for the support of the gunners. *Dom mahāl* implied lands held by the drummers and musicians. *Kāhārān mahāl* meant such lands as were held by palanquin-bearers. *Khāṭāli mahāl* indicated lands assigned to the coolies and the labourers in the fort. *Hāṭilā mahāl* constituted those lands on which markets were held at Vishnupur and *Be-talab mahāl* connoted the lands granted by the raja for charitable and religious purposes. There were a few other types of service tenure held by personal servants of the raja all of whom were liable to pay a *panchak* or quit-rent.[1]

Rent-free tenures were known by different names such as *Brahmottar*, *Sivottar*, *Devottar* etc., the income from the lands concerned being meant for the support of a Brahmin or a temple of Siva or a temple in general, or as *Pirottar*, *Chirāgur* etc., where the grantees were Muslims.

F. W. Robertson noted some peculiarities in the land tenure system prevailing in the Jungle Mahāls consisting of the parganas of Chhatna, Supur, Ambikanagar, Raipur, Phulkusma, Shyamsundarpur, Bhelaidiha and Simlapal where the second son of the proprietor was known as *hikim*, the third as *baraṭhākur* and other younger sons

[1] F. W. Robertson—op. cit. p. 63.

as *bābu*. As the eldest son succeeded to the estate, it was usual to provide the younger sons with grants of land[1] known as *khorposh* or *bābuān* grants. Originally, such grants were probably non-transferable and resumable in the absence of legitimate male heirs of the original grantee, but in course of time the grants became unconditional and, during Robertson's settlement operations, were freely transferred and were unresumable. All these grants were held free of rent. In the Khatra zemindari there was a custom according to which lands set aside for the *hikim* had to be vacated by him in favour of the succeeding *hikim*, if his elder brother died and he succeeded to the main estate. Such *hikimi* lands were non-transferable. The other sons received smaller *bābuān* grants which were, by custom, inheritable and transferable. In the Jungle Mahāls there was a peculiar system known as the *mandali* system[2] of which Robertson gave the following account in his Settlement Report: "Whoever may have been the original inhabitants of these jungle tracts, in historical times we find the whole area in the possession of Santals and kindred aboriginal and semi-aboriginal races. It was they who cleared the jungle and with great labour terraced the land to make it fit for the cultivation of paddy. Before the Permanent Settlement and before the introduction of the *dikku* or foreigner (Bengali), the Santali organization afforded a very complete picture of the village community. At the head stood the headman, the *mandal*, *manjhi* or *pradhan* as he was called, and through his hands all the business of the community had to pass. When a Santal community settled on the land, all negotiations were between the proprietor and the *mandal*, and the latter alone was responsible for the rent. In the Jungle Mahals usually a tract of jungle within very vaguely defined boundaries would be settled with such a community for clearance and cultivation The *mandal* then distributed the land among his co-villagers, making them responsible for the rent according to the area settled. The whole area was ordinarily divided into 12 or 16 *rekhs*. রেখ denotes a straight line, and probably originally indicated the amount of land which one plough could plough in a day. A certain proportion of the land, one or more *rekhs*, was retained by the headman for himself and the village officials as their *khem* or *mān* land which they held free of rent by virtue of their official position. In origin then the *mandal*, though responsible for the joint rent of the village, was a co-ryot with the villagers and in no sense occupied the position of a tenure-holder over them."[3]

On the break up of the *mundali* system, Robertson observes that "the introduction of the *dikku* or foreigner into the Jungle Mahals

[1] See chapter on People.

[2] See also chapter on People, specially for the structural framework of the *mandali* system.

[3] F. W. Robertson—op. cit. pp. 58-59.

was the cause of the gradual decay of the *mandali* system. These foreigners, Bengalis from the east and Utkal Brahmins from Orissa in the west, came in first as traders. Soon they took to the more profitable employment of money-lending and thus got a hold on the land. The ease with which money could be made at the expense of the simple people induced more and more foreigners to settle, and the result has been the rapid decline in prosperity of the aboriginal tribes. There are two causes for the decay of the *mandali* system, one of which is external and the other internal. The improvidence of the local Rajas was as great as that of their tenants, and when the Bengalis had secured a footing in the country they easily got both Raja and tenant into their clutches. Thus we find that the Rajas brought in Bengali middlemen between them and their tenants and gave them permanent *mokarrari* lease of the villages. Again the *mandals* were forced to sell to Bengali *mahajans* who stepped into their places. In both cases the result was the break up of the *mandali* system. In the first case the middleman gradually broke the power of the *mandal*, collected rents directly from individual tenants and enhanced their rents. He either dispossessed the original *mandal* of his *khem* lands altogether or assessed them to rent at the ordinary rates. In the second case, the *mahajan*, who had stepped into the shoes of the *mandal*, arrogated to himself the position of a tenure-holder and enhanced the rents of the tenants, which he collected for his own benefit. The process appears to have been fairly rapid with the result that at the present day the Bengali *mahajan* is to be found as the middleman in possession of a complete village or group of villages holding them under a permanent *mokarrari* lease. Hardly a single Santal or aboriginal is to be found holding a similar position in the area."[1]

Robertson also noticed three peculiar types of tenancies, namely the *lāṅgal-chāsh*, the *jal-sāsan* and the produce rent tenancies. Under *lāṅgal-chāsh* tenancies, which occurred in the Taldangra thana, rent was assessed on the plough at the rate of 8 as. to Re. 1 per plough, the assumption being that there was a distinct relationship between the area cultivated by the tenant and the number of ploughs in his possession.[2] In the *jal-sāsan* tenancies, which were mainly to be found in the higher lands of northern and central Bankura, in thanas Indpur, Saltora, Mejia, Gangajalghati and Barjora, settlement was made of waste and jungle lands within specified boundaries.[3] These tenancies were usually created by registered *sanads* which stipulated that the settlement-holder should bring the land under cultivation by excavating tanks at his own expense. There were four main classes of *jal-sāsan* tenancies. The simplest of them consisted in the

[1] ibid. p. 59.
[2] ibid. p. 61.
[3] ibid. pp. 61-62.

grant of land free of rent on condition that the grantee should excavate a tank at his own expense for irrigating it as also neighbouring lands. The second type was one in which permission was given to the grantee to bring under cultivation, by means of excavation of a tank, waste lands in a certain area. No rent was charged for the first three years but in the fourth year, the area reclaimed was measured and assessed to rent according to the local rates for similar lands. The grantee was, however, allowed a remission of rent which varied from 2 annas to 4 annas in the rupee in consideration of his having made arrangements for irrigating the land at his own expense. The third kind of grant occurred where the land to be irrigated from the tank which the grantee excavated was larger than what he could cultivate. In such cases, the remainder was settled with third parties who were entitled to irrigate their lands with the water of the tank excavated by the *jal-sāsan* tenant. The area thus settled with third persons was taken into account when considering the remission of rent permissible to the *jal-sāsan* tenant. The fourth variety of *jal-sāsan* tenancy provided for the settlement of a portion of a large area of waste land with the *jal-sāsan* tenant for his own cultivation while the remainder was settled with outsiders but the *jal-sāsan* tenant was required to make arrangements for the irrigation of the whole area. He was given a corresponding remission of rent varying from 2 annas to 4 annas in the rupee and was permitted to collect rent at the rate of 2 annas to 4 annas in the rupee assessed on others. Tenancies paying produce-rent fell into two classes—*sānjā* and *bhāg*. In the former case, the rent consisted of a fixed amount to be paid mostly in kind while in the latter it consisted mostly of a percentage of the produce. In some cases, where the landlord provided the ploughs, cattle and seeds, he took as much as two-thirds of the produce, the cultivator taking only one-third as the reward for his labour.[1]

In 1792 Keating fixed certain rates of rent for the resumed *lākherāj* lands, known as Keating's *nirikhnāmā*,[2] which varied from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per *bighā* for ordinary paddy (*sāli*) lands and from Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 for double-cropped (*sunā*) lands. These rates were found subsisting even in 1917-24 and Robertson thought that land-rents in Bankura were very much lower than those in other districts where record of rights had been prepared. The table overleaf gives a thanawise account of the average rents payable per acre in 1917-24 by settled ryots in Bankura district.[3]

So far as produce rent was concerned, it consisted of a wide variety of articles ranging from a broomstick to a quantity of molasses. In some rare cases, a piece of cloth was fixed as the rent and while

[1] ibid. p. 64.
[2] ibid. p. 70.
[3] ibid. pp. 69-70.

Thana	Rent per acre Rs. as. p.
Raipur	0 14 8
Simlapal	0 12 2
Ranibandh	0 7 10
Khatra	0 10 8
Chhatna	0 13 7
Indpur	0 12 10
Mejia	2 2 3
Saltora	1 14 9
Gangajalghati	2 1 7
Barjora	1 11 0
Taldangra	0 11 11
Onda	1 10 6
Bankura	1 8 1
Average for the Sadar subdivision	1 3 9
Sonamukhi	2 5 9
Patrasayer	3 5 11
Indas	4 6 1
Kotulpur	4 10 3
Siromanipur	4 2 6
Joypur	3 12 6
Vishnupur	1 8 8
Radhanagar	2 3 7
Average for the Vishnupur subdivision	3 4 6
Average for the district	1 12 7

the length of the cloth was specified in the original contract, no mention was made of the breadth, "the consequence being that the piece of cloth given as rent tends to become narrower and narrower and is in danger of vanishing altogether."[1] Such rents were paid almost without exception for homestead lands and high lands adjoining them. It was probable that these lands were originally granted without any rent and that the various commodities mentioned above were in the nature of presents to the superior landlords and in time they came to be regarded as rent.

According to Robertson, the most important land problem of Bankura district was the one relating to produce rent. In Bankura a high percentage of lands in the possession of settled ryots was held on produce rent or on a mixed cash and produce rent basis. As Robertson says: "This increase in the number of produce-paying tenancies is easily accounted for. The people of the district are poor and thriftless. Famine and scarcity are of frequent occurrence. Against a failure of crops the people have no reserves on which they can fall back. They must borrow for their food and for seeds which will give them their livelihood in the coming year. Their lands are their only security for the money or the grain which they

[1] ibid. p. 64.

borrow. Sooner or later they are unable to pay the interest on the debt and their lands are sold up. As a rule the landlord is also the money-lender, and is the natural purchaser of the holding when it is put up for sale. He is the only person interested in the purchase of the land who has sufficient capital to purchase it. It happens, therefore, that there are no bidders at the sale and the holding is knocked down to the landlord-*mahajan* for a fraction of its value, for a sum just sufficient to cover the amount decreed against the tenant. Having secured possession of the holding, the landlord resettles it with the original occupant on a produce (usually a *sanja*) rent. He is the natural and convenient person with whom settlement may be made, and the natural love of the Bengali cultivator for his home and his aversion to emigration make him submit even to the payment of a rack-rent provided he can at all find subsistence in his own village.

"The result is economically disastrous. Unable to avoid debt when subject to the payment of a comparatively small cash rent, it is not to be supposed that the cultivator will succeed in keeping clear of debt when burdened with the payment of a very heavy produce rent. It is a vicious circle, and while such a state of things continues not only can no improvement be expected in the material condition of the cultivator, but it is difficult to expect any improvement in the system of agriculture. In defence of the system it is urged on behalf of the landlord that he has paid for the purchase of the holding in cash and must expect some increase in the rent to recoup him for this expenditure. The argument is specious, but is certainly no argument against a change in present conditions.

"Experience has shown that produce rents are economically unsound. They are in the best interests neither of the district nor of the landlord nor of the tenant. It has been calculated that the highest proportion of the gross produce of the holding which can economically be demanded is one-fifth. *Sanja* rents ordinarily are calculated on the basis of one-third of the produce of the holding in a normal year. *Bhag* rents consist of one-half, and sometimes even nine-sixteenth of the gross produce of the holding, while mixed cash and produce rents often represent an even higher proportion. These rents are clearly rack-rents, and it is the persistent and rapid spread of produce rents in this district, and indeed in Western Bengal as a whole, that constitutes a real obstacle to any improvement in agricultural conditions and any raising of the people themselves in the scale of civilization.

"In a district such as Bankura where the cultivator is faced with the probability of a total or partial failure of crops every third or fourth year, the system of *bhag* rental has something to recommend it. The rent varies according to the crop. With *sanja* rentals it is otherwise. Though the crops fail the rent remains the same, and in a famine

year the tenant must inevitably have recourse to the money-lender. The figures ... show that *sanja* rentals are much commoner than *bhag* rentals. In the district where famines are frequent, *sanja* are more advantageous than *bhag* rentals to the landlords. They get their regular income from the land in spite of failure of crops. It is consequently the landlords' endeavour to make all new settlements or re-settlements on a *sanja* rental. In Bankura the raiyats are not only ignorant and helpless but they are thoroughly subservient to the landlords. The result is the increase in *sanja* rents and the consequent increasing impoverishment of the district. It is only in the east of the district where the tenants are comparatively prosperous that the danger is less insistent. Here *sanja* tenancies are less frequent and there is little opportunity of new settlement or resettlement."[1]

According to a report recently received from the Director of Land Records & Surveys, West Bengal, it appears that during the settlement operations of 1917-24, *rāiyati* holdings recorded in the district numbered 3,12,439 while during the Revisional Settlement taken up in 1954, the corresponding figure was as high as 6,84,522, thereby accounting for an increase of 119 per cent in the number of such holdings over a period of about 40 years. The following table enumerates the various types of *rāiyati* holdings recorded in the district during the Revisional Settlement of 1954 onwards:

Nature of *rāiyati* holding	Total number in the district
(*i*) Paying rent in cash	5,97,410
(*ii*) Paying rent in kind	48,446
(*iii*) Paying rent partly in cash and partly in kind	24,563
(*iv*) Holding free of rent	8,311
(*v*) Holding in lieu of service	5,792
Total	6,84,522

According to the same source, the number of under-*rāiyati* holdings in the district rose from 94,119 in 1917-24 to 2,02,537 during the Revisional Settlement, registering an increase of 114 per cent in this category over the same period. The details of various types of under-*rāiyati* holdings recorded in the district during the Revisional Settlement are given in the table below:

Nature of under-*rāiyati* holding	Total number in the district
(*i*) Paying rent in cash	1,76,241
(*ii*) Paying rent in kind	18,260
(*iii*) Paying rent partly in cash and partly in kind	8,036
Total	2,02,537

[1] Ibid. pp. 70-71.

The Director of Land Records & Surveys, West Bengal, also reported that besides the *sānjā* (produce rent) tenancies mentioned above, there were 20,024 under-tenures and non-agricultural tenancies in the district paying produce rents.

Present system of survey, assessment and collection of land revenue etc.

The West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act of 1953 came into force in two stages, in April 1955 and April 1956 with the result that intermediary rights in land ceased to exist. The actual cultivators of the soil were thus brought into direct relationship with the State of which they became tenants. For the first time in 1955-56 rents were realized direct from the tenants and the total sum collected was Rs. 22,48,739. It would be interesting to compare the amounts collected in Bankura district by way of land revenue before and after the coming into operation of the Estates Acquisition Act. It should, however, be borne in mind that direct collection of land revenue by the State has also encumbered it with a fairly heavy collection expenditure. The table below, providing the relevant figures, would show that the new arrangements have led to a sizable increase in the *gross* revenue collections in the district.[1]

TOTAL DEMAND AND COLLECTION OF LAND REVENUE AND CESS IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1951-52 TO 1964-65

Year	Total demand including arrears (Rs.)	Total collections (Rs.)
1951-52	8,68,337	3,63,960
1952-53	10,51,022	5,25,596
1953-54	10,34,113	4,79,581
1954-55	10,36,252	2,04,138
1955-56	36,09,375	22,48,739
1956-57	41,53,841	23,88,334
1957-58	27,40,890	25,14,910
1958-59	62,15,109	21,92,896
1959-60	57,91,084	22,27,300
1960-61	61,22,510	34,79,793
1961-62	56,67,446	26,02,701
1962-63	47,31,748	36,53,263
1963-64	41,78,087	29,08,781
1964-65	42,36,205	37,35,452

It is seen that the rise in the collection of land revenue in the

[1] Sources: (*a*) Reports from the District Magistrate, Bankura, and
(*b*) Records of the Board of Revenue, West Bengal.

district has not been steady. The fluctuations noticed from year to year since 1955-56 were due to varying amounts of arrears and interests as also because of differing amounts of miscellaneous dues[1] collected in successive years. The increase in miscellaneous collections took place as a result of the gradually increasing number of *sair* interests taken possession of and settled, as also from royalties on minor minerals which have been in great demand in recent years.[2]

The immediate problem which confronted the Collector with the abolition of the zemindari system related to produce rents. It was clearly impractical for him to receive paddy, broomsticks, goats or ghee offered as produce rent. The actual commuted value, calculated at the prevailing market rates, was, therefore, realized in cash from the tenants paying produce rents. Since the year 1363 B.S. (1956-57), such rents are being collected at the rate of Rs. 9 per acre or the commuted value of the articles tendered in kind as rent, whichever is less.[3] For the purpose of calculation of compensation payable to the intermediaries, however, the money value of *sānjā* rent is calculated in a different manner. Here the quantity of the produce actually received by the landlords during the preceding seven years or during any shorter period for which evidence is available is taken into account and the corresponding money value calculated on the basis of the average market price of such produce during the period in question. The implementation of the Estates Acquisition Act has come as a blessing to those tenants who had been paying *sānjā* rents as, in their case, the equivalent rent was, in some cases, as high as Rs. 20 to Rs. 28 per *bighā* (taking Rs. 8 as the price per maund of paddy) against an average prevailing cash rent of about Re. 1 per *bighā*.[4]

The change-over from the zemindari system to the ryotwary system has necessitated the setting up of a new administrative machinery for the collection of rents from the tenants. There is an Additional District Magistrate in charge of the land revenue administration of the district who exercises analogous powers and has concurrent jurisdiction with the Magistrate-Collector of the district in all matters pertaining to land revenues. Under him there is a Land Reforms Officer in each of the two subdivisions. The Sadar subdivision is divided into 8 and the Vishnupur subdivision into 5 Land Reforms Circles each under a Junior Land Reforms Officer. Each Circle is further subdivided into a number of Tahsil Blocks (their total number in the district being 335 in 1965-66) which are under the immediate care of Tahsildars who are part-time Government servants

[1] Miscellaneous collections include royalties from mines and minerals, rents from fisheries, ferries, *hāts*, grazing leases and cost of collection for realising arrears from ex-intermediaries.

[2-4] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

drawing an allowance of Rs. 27 per month plus commissions on actual collections on a graduated scale. Rent is collected by the Tahsildar on the basis of rent rolls prepared from the record of rights finalized during the current Revisional Settlement operations. The Tahsildar is assisted in his work by a peon whose monthly allowance varies from Rs. 12 to Rs 16. Each Tahsildar has either to deposit personally at the district or subdivisional treasury the amounts collected by him or, if he is stationed at a distance from them, to send the money by postal money order.

LAND REFORMS

The history of the relations between landlords and tenants in the district has been traced earlier in this chapter.[1]

Relations between landlord and tenant

Under the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act as well as the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, the ex-intermediaries, ryots and under-ryots are permitted to retain up to a ceiling of 25 acres of agricultural and 15 acres of non-agricultural lands in their *khās* possession. Rents for such lands are realized at the same rates paid by ryots for similar lands in the vicinity. If any land was held free of rent before the abolition of intermediary interests in land, in consideration of some service rendered, the rent is fixed on the basis of the rent paid by the ryots or non-agricultural tenants for lands of similar description and with the same advantages in the same locality.

The lands held by ex-intermediaries in excess of these limits are in the process of resumption by the State in accordance with the provisions of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act with a view to distributing them among landless agriculturists and those having very small holdings.

Up to 1965-66 the State Government paid to the ex-intermediaries of the district Rs. 2,77,70,345 and Rs. 19,15,200 as *ad interim* and final compensations respectively for resumption of their excess lands.

The *Bhoodān* Movement in the district

Sufficient details about the *Bhoodān* Movement in the district are not available. According to information collected through local enquiries,[2] it appears that a total area of 255.87 hectares (639.64 acres) in the district has so far been given away by their owners in pursuance of the *Bhoodān* Movement. The first *grāmdān* (bequeathing of a village) took place in the district on 12th December 1954, while the first *bhoodān* (beqeathing of land) took place on 1st March 1952. The names of the *grāmdān* villages are Dharampur and Kamalpur in Patrasayer police station; Hetiā, Kelerdāngā, Ānandapur, Benchāprā, Joypur, Routhkhanda and Jāmdigari in Joypur police station and Kānāipur, Denguā, Mathurātapal, Gourā, Tahanān, Bendāngrā, Chak-Raghu, Kānchane, Komalpārā, Sihar and Pātpur in Kotulpur police station. The area of land given away in pursuance of the *Bhoodān* Movement was 1.98 hectares (4.95 acres) in

[1] Also see chapters on History and People.
[2] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

thana Onda; 2.12 hectares (5.28 acres) in thana Barjora; 91.6 hectares (229 acres) in thana Kotulpur; 105.13 hectares (262.82 acres) in thana Patrasayer and 55.04 hectares (137.59 acres) in thana Simlapal.

OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUE

Agricultural Income Tax

Agricultural income tax is realized under the provisions of the Bengal Agricultural Income Tax Act of 1944, which is in force in West Bengal with suitable adaptations. The Act provides for the assessment of income tax on agricultural income as defined therein. The amounts realized are credited to the State revenues. The districts of Midnapur and Bankura are grouped together within the Midnapur Range for the purpose of collection of this tax.[1] The break-up of figures for the demand and collection of agricultural income tax for the district of Bankura alone is shown below.[2]

Year	Demand (Rs.)	Collection (Rs.)
1962-63	52,146	44,678
1963-64	49,536	46,839
1964-65	38,196	28,364

Commercial Taxes

Taxation on the sale of goods was introduced in Bengal in July 1941 under the Bengal Financial (Sales Tax) Act of 1941. This Act, with suitable adaptations, is in force in West Bengal. The West Bengal Sales Tax Act, 1954 provides for the imposition of a tax on sale of cigarettes. The total annual collections under these two Acts between 1957-58 and 1964-65 are given in the table below:

Year	Total collections under the B.F.S.T. & W.B.S.T. Acts (Rs.)
1957-58	8,52,526
1958-59	6,25,931
1959-60	6,29,043
1960-61	7,24,948
1961-62	6,72,269
1962-63	8,26,508
1963-64	8,44,363
1964-65	10,91,313

The Bengal Motor Spirits Sales Taxation Act of 1941 provides for a levy on retail sales of motor spirits to further the construction

[1-2] Source: Commissioner, Agricultural Income Tax, West Bengal.

of new roads in Bengal. This law, with necessary adaptations, is in force in West Bengal. Total collections under this Act in recent years in the Bankura district have been as follows:

Year	Total collections under the B.M.S.S.T. Act (Rs.)
1957-58	2,07,363
1958-59	3,40,533
1959-60	4,19,559
1960-61	4,49,455
1961-62	4,58,780
1962-63	5,07,427
1963-64	4,47,467
1964-65	4,21,842

The Central Sales Tax Act of 1956 provides for taxes on sale of goods in the course of inter-State trade and commerce. Under this Act each State Government functions as the representative of the Government of India in regard to the collection of taxes accruing within that particular State. The law provides that the proceeds (reduced by the cost of collection) in any financial year of any tax levied and collected under this Act in any State on behalf of the Government of India, except in so far as they represent revenues attributable to Union territories, shall be assigned to that State and be retained by it. The amounts collected under this Act are, however, small as would be evident from the following table: [1]

Year	Total collections under the C.S.T. Act (Rs.)
1957-58	5,663
1958-59	15,353
1959-60	26,609
1960-61	39,391
1961-62	28,899
1962-63	21,384
1963-64	38,233
1964-65	44,176

[1] Source: Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, West Bengal.

State Excise Revenue

The total excise revenue (State) collected in the district[1] in 1961-62 amounted to Rs. 8,32,782, in 1962-63 to Rs. 7,87,962, in 1963-64 to Rs. 7,87,266, and in 1964-65 to Rs. 11,81,193.

Income tax

Income tax collected in the district is not large. The number of assessees seldom crosses the 500 mark and the total annual receipts are generally in the region of Rs. 10 lakhs.[2]

[1] Sources: District Magistrate, Bankura and the Department of Finance, Govt. of West Bengal.
[2] Source: Commissioner of Income Tax, West Bengal.

CHAPTER XI

LAW ORDER AND JUSTICE

INCIDENCE OF CRIME

As regards incidence of crimes, Bankura may be considered a normal district. The table overleaf gives the frequency of occurrence of different types of crimes in the district from 1960 to 1965.

In order to even out temporary fluctuations, a 5-year average from 1961 to 1965 may be taken for an analysis of the incidence of crimes in the district as compared to that in the whole State. The statement below would give an idea of the relative position in respect of six major crimes, namely dacoity, burglary, theft, cattle theft, murder and sex offences.

PERCENTAGE OF CRIMES: 1961-65

	Dacoity	Burglary	Theft	Cattle theft	Murder	Sex offences
West Bengal	1.78	30.94	59.08	2.38	1.37	4.45
Bankura	3.07	29.90	59.14	2.17	2.86	2.86

The foregoing figures would reveal that while dacoity, murder and theft occurring in the district are above the State averages, cattle theft, burglary and sex crimes are below them, the most significant difference being in the case of murder, dacoity and sex offences.

The incidence of crime in the district may be looked at from another point of view. According to the 1961 Census, the total population of Bankura was 16,64,513. From the Administration Report of 1872-73,[1] we find that the population of the district was 5,26,772 in 1872. Contrasting the total number of cases lodged against the population of 1872, we find that the ratio between population and crime was 118 %, while the same in the year 1961 was 117 %. Such a comparison is pertinent inasmuch as we find the overall decrease in the crime figures to be only 1 % although we are reviewing two widely divergent societies separated by about 90 years, completely different social circumstances and administrative arrangements.

Enforcement offences

A comparatively recent type of offence appears to be on the increase in the district. It relates to the violation of the West Bengal Rice and Paddy Control Order, 1957, the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and such other pieces of legislation enforced to control

[1] Report on the Administration of Bengal (1872-73). p. 126.

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF PRINCIPAL CRIMES IN BANKURA DISTRICT : 1960-65

Year	Dacoity	Robbery	Burglary	Theft (except cattle theft)	Cattle theft	Murder	Rioting	Sex crimes	Offences relating to enforcement	
									F.I.R.	Non-F.I.R.
1960	16	21	272	408	10	7	117	17	67	557
1961	15	12	235	487	18	23	97	20	109	832
1962	38	15	296	507	13	26	95	24	134	712
1963	28	17	201	545	18	14	59	21	169	851
1964	25	13	201	419	22	29	107	28	195	625
1965	19	10	281	443	17	24	90	23	553	687
Total	141	88	1,486	2,809	98	123	565	133	1,227	4,264

the prices of foodgrains, their movement and distribution etc. In the background of an overall shortage of edibles in the country, the increase in the incidence of such crimes may not be surprising.

Excise offences

There is another sphere where propensity to crime is becoming socially significant with the progress in material amenities and urbanization of society. Violation of the Bengal Excise Act, 1909, for instance, has considerable impact on the overall social behaviour pattern. The table[1] below will show its incidence in the district between 1960-61 and 1964-65.

Year	No. of Excise cases apprehended	No. of convictions
1960-61	2,981	2,626
1961-62	3,011	2,658
1962-63	3,077	2,448
1963-64	3,378	3,010
1964-65	3,641	3,372
Total	16,088	14,114

Here the extent of both apprehension and conviction is clearly on the increase. A commonly prevalent idea of illicit distillation being extensive among the tribals appears to be misconceived at least as far as this district is concerned. It is reported[2] that illicit distillation is mostly found in areas around the municipal towns of Bankura and Vishnupur and in the vicinity of the Asansol-Durgapur industrial belt. It is, therefore, reasonable to attribute the incentive for such contraband practices to the sudden accumulation of ready cash in the hands of the patrons in the wealthy urban areas than to traditional tribal customs.

Prosecution and conviction

No discussion on incidence of crime is complete without the reported crime figures being reviewed against conviction statistics. The following table would throw light on this aspect of the matter.

Year	No. of cases lodged with the police	No. of cases prosecuted by the police	No. of cases convicted by the Courts
1960	1,811	1,142	861
1961	1,963	1,146	819
1962	2,806	1,614	1,332
1963	3,141	1,955	1,713
1964	3,641	2,279	1,995
1965	3,274	3,076	2,827
Total	16,636	11,212	9,547

[1-2] Source : Superintendent of Excise, Bankura.

It appears from the foregoing table that, on an average, 2,772.7 cases are lodged with the police of which 1,868.7 cases are proceeded with ending in 1,591.2 convictions each year. Although there is always a chance of a spill-over from one year to the other because of the time taken in investigation and trial, a 6-year average, as above, may be reasonably considered as giving a nearly correct picture. It is further seen that while 67.4% of the complaints lodged with the police are found worth prosecuting after investigation, 57.4% of the original complaints actually end in convictions which may not be an unsatisfactory figure.

Taking 1960 and 1965 as the two base years, it is found that while the percentage of conviction to prosecution in 1960 was 75.4, it rose to 91.9 in 1965. Looking back in time we see that in 1868 there were only 210 convictions against 779 prosecutions with the percentage of convictions to prosecutions standing at 27.[1] Over the 1960-65 period the corresponding percentage was 85.

These facts may be of interest if contrasted with contemporaneous population figures. In 1872, the population of Bankura was 5,26,772. With conviction figures of that particular year at 1,210, the population to conviction ratio was 1 : 2,508. Over the 1960-65 period, the corresponding population (according to the 1961 Census) to conviction ratio stood at 1 : 1,406. It is interesting to note that while the ratio between population and reported crimes varied very little over this period, the same between population and convictions registered a considerable decrease. This is, perhaps, attributable to better police investigation and uniform standards of law enforcement.

ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICE FORCE

The post of Superintendent of Police for the district was created under the Bengal Police Act, 1861 and the first incumbent joined at Bankura the same year.[2] The police organization of the district is now headed by the Superintendent of Police who is assisted by two Deputy Superintendents at Sadar and one at Vishnupur who acts as the Subdivisional Police Officer for the latter subdivision.

For police purposes the district has been divided into three Circles: Sadar, Vishnupur and Khatra. The Sadar Circle consists of seven police stations, namely Bankura, Barjora, Gangajalghati, Mejia, Saltora, Chhatna and Onda. The Vishnupur Circle consists of six police stations: Vishnupur, Joypur, Kotulpur, Indas. Patrasayer and Sonamukhi while the Khatra Circle includes six police stations: Khatra, Ranibandh, Raipur, Simlapal, Taldangra and Indpur. There are thus 19 police stations in all in the district. Each Circle is headed by a Circle Inspector of Police who has his own complement of office staff. The personnel pattern at each police station is given below.

[1] Report on the Administration of Bengal (1868-69). p. 103.
[2] Report on the Administration of Bengal (1901-02). p. 53.

Name of police station	Sub-Inspector of Police	Asst. Sub-Inspector of Police	Constable
Bankura	6	5	18
Chhatna	2	2	12
Gangajalghati	1	1	8
Mejia	1	1	8
Saltora	1	1	8
Barjora	1	1	8
Onda	2	2	12
Taldangra	1	1	8
Raipur	3	3	14
Khatra	1	1	10
Indpur	1	1	8
Ranibandh	1	1	10
Simlapal	1	1	8
Vishnupur	4	4	16
Joypur	1	2	10
Kotulpur	1	1	8
Sonamukhi	1	1	8
Indas	1	1	8
Patrasayer	1	1	8

Enforcement organization

There is a separate police force under the Superintendent of Police to deal with Enforcement offences. It consists of an Inspector, six Sub-Inspectors, one Assistant Sub-Inspector and nine constables.

Home Guards and National Volunteer Force

Besides the regular police set-up, there are certain semi-official organizations like the Home Guards and the National Volunteer Force, the personnel of which are recruited from the local people who volunteer their services on specific occasions not as full-time officers but on a part-time basis. Such auxiliary organizations are not exactly a recent innovation. From the Administration Report of 1890-91 it is found that a special constabulary was raised in Bankura in 1890 to meet the anti-missionary riots which broke out in the district at that time. The constabulary, numbering 140, derived its sanction under Section 17 of Act V of 1861 and the force was employed for six days to meet the law and order situation created by the riots.[1] The Home Guards organization was established in the district on November 30, 1962 with a total provision for 330 urban and 2,420

[1] Report on the Administration of Bengal (1890-91). p. 27.

rural volunteers. It is headed by one District Commandant and one Home Guard Commander posted at Bankura town who have jurisdiction over the whole district. There is a Deputy Commander at Vishnupur having jurisdiction over the Vishnupur subdivision. At present there is only one Group Commander in the district who is posted at Chhatna. Latest figures show that up to the beginning of 1966, 973 urban and 442 rural Home Guards were enlisted in the district. A special programme for training these recruits has been taken in hand under the supervision of the Superintendent of Police and it is making satisfactory progress. The following table will show the thanawise distribution of Home Guards and the progress of their training.

Police Station	Trained	Under training
Bankura	47	—
Vishnupur	50	—
Onda	23	15
Sonamukhi	—	41
Chhatna	21	—
Barjora	—	37
Mejia	—	30
Indpur	—	2
Khatra	—	28
Raipur	—	82
Taldangra	—	8
Saltora	—	141
Kotulpur	—	14
Total	141	398

It is reported that the Home Guards assisted the regular police force during 1962 and 1965 when the borders of India were threatened. They are also called up from time to time to assist the administration in checking smuggling and the like.

The National Volunteer Force is organizationally different from the Home Guards set-up inasmuch as the latter are mainly people pursuing their own callings and volunteering their services free. The N.V.F., on the other hand, consists of young men who form a more or less permanent second line of reserve to be utilized when the bulk of the regular police force is overworked due to any sudden increase in their duties. The N.V.F. set-up in the district is headed by the District Magistrate and the Sadar S.D.O. who function in their

ex-officio capacities as the Chief District Commander and the Deputy Chief District Commander respectively. There is also a District Commander who is a part-time officer and an Assistant Company Commander who is a full-time officer. The district force is divided into 5 platoons with one Platoon Commander in charge of each and having headquarters at Bankura, Vishnupur, Beliatore, Khatra and Onda. The Bankura platoon exercises supervision over Bankura, Chhatna, Saltora and Indpur police stations; the Vishnupur platoon over the entire Vishnupur subdivision; the Beliatore platoon over Gangajalghati, Beliatore and Mejia police stations; the Khatra platoon over Ranibandh, Joypur and Khatra thanas and the Onda platoon over Taldangra, Simlapal and Onda police stations. Each platoon is divided into four sections with a Section Commander in charge. Each section is, again, composed of the Section Commander and 15 N.V.F. personnel making a 16-man team. The strength of a platoon with four sections thus comes to 64. The N.V.F. men's training is fairly rigorous and almost complete for primary police work. Up to December 1965, there were 2,265 trained N.V.F. volunteers in the district. The services of the National Volunteer Force were requisitioned by the district authorities on several occasions and they discharged their duties creditably.

Village Resistance Groups

In the rural areas there are also Village Resistance Groups which act as self-help organizations of local people and provide supplementary assistance to the regular police force particularly in areas where communications are difficult.

Chowkidars and Dafadars

A regular rural police force exists in the form of Chowkidars and Dafadars who are maintained by the Anchal Panchayats. Regulation Chowkidars, numbering 987, were first appointed in Bankura in the year 1893. The activities of this wing of the rural police have been described in the chapter on Local Self-Government.

Railway Police

The Superintendent of Police is also the *ex-officio* Additional Superintendent of Railway Police and commands the G.R.P. force employed for enforcement of the provisions of the Indian Railways Act of 1890.

Excise personnel

There is a separate establishment for enforcing the Excise Act of 1909 which comes under the Excise wing of the district administration. The Collector exercises direct control over the Excise staff with the assistance of a Superintendent of Excise having jurisdiction over the entire district. There is an Inspector of Excise who supervises the work of six Sub-Inspectors in charge of the six Excise Circles. There is another Sub-Inspector in charge of the Excise warehouse. Four Assistant Sub-Inspectors lead four raiding parties composed of some of the 39 Excise constables working in the district.[1]

[1] Source: Superintendent of Excise, Bankura.

JAILS AND LOCK-UPS

The intermediate jail at Bankura town was upgraded into a first class jail in 1893.[1] At present there are two Sub-jails in the district at Bankura and Vishnupur. Lock-ups are attached to every police station where prisoners are kept before they are produced before Magistrates. Once so produced, they are either bailed out or detained further in suitable *hāzats* under orders of appropriate courts pending investigation and trial.

Personnel pattern

The Subdivisional Officers are the Superintendents of the Sub-jails at Bankura and Vishnupur. There is a Sub-Jailor attached to each of them who works as the chief executive officer under the supervision of the Superintendent. The other functionary attached to each Sub-jail is a Medical Officer. The District Medical Officer, Bankura and the Subdivisional Medical Officer, Vishnupur are the *ex-officio* Medical Officers of the Bankura and Vishnupur Sub-jails respectively.

Work-load

The work-load of the Bankura Sub-jail is greater than that of the Vishnupur Sub-jail. It appears from the latest available figures that although there was an increase in the number of prisoners in 1963 over that of 1962, there has been a steady decrease in the number of inmates in the two Sub-jails in succeeding years. The following table[2] sets forth the composition of the convict populations in the Bankura and Vishnupur Sub-jails according to the lengths of terms served out by them from 1962 to 1965.

CLASSIFICATION OF CONVICTS IN BANKURA SUB-JAIL ACCORDING TO PRISON TERMS

Period	1962		1963		1964		1965	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Not exceeding 1 month	255	20	440	13	273	9	230	2
Above 1 month but not exceeding 3 months	141	2	55	0	57	1	23	1
Above 3 months but not exceeding 6 months	25	3	23	0	26	0	11	0
Above 6 months but not exceeding 1 year	18	0	28	0	34	0	17	0
Above 1 year but not exceeding 2 years	19	2	42	0	29	0	11	0
Above 2 years but not exceeding 5 years	7	0	12	0	15	2	14	0
Above 5 years but not exceeding 10 years	8	0	10	0	15	0	0	0
Above 10 years	4	0	11	0	1	0	0	0
Sentenced to death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yearly total	477	27	621	13	450	12	306	3

[1] Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1893-94. p. 51.
[2] Source: Superintendents of Bankura and Vishnupur Sub-jails.

CLASSIFICATION OF CONVICTS IN VISHNUPUR SUB-JAIL ACCORDING TO PRISON TERMS

Period	1962		1963		1964		1965	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Not exceeding 1 month	118	30	143	32	73	18	49	4
Above 1 month but not exceeding 3 months	32	0	28	0	27	2	38	0
Above 3 months but not exceeding 6 months	18	0	21	0	24	0	12	0
Above 6 months but not exceeding 1 year	11	0	7	0	3	0	2	0
Above 1 year but not exceeding 2 years	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0
Above 2 years but not exceeding 5 years	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Above 5 years but not exceeding 10 years	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Above 10 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sentenced to death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yearly total	183	30	201	32	128	20	105	4

It is clear from the foregoing table that in both the jails convicts serving for a month or less constitute the largest single groups which become thinner as the period of imprisonment increases.

Incidence of conviction classified on the basis of age and sex

Incidence of conviction according to age-groups and sex is of considerable sociological interest particularly when the modern approach is to evolve a durable method of reformation rather than meting out mere legal retributions to the offenders. The following table[1] classifying the convicts according to their age and sex may be helpful in drawing appropriate conclusions.

CLASSIFICATION OF CONVICTS IN BANKURA SUB-JAIL ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

Age-groups	1962		1963		1964		1965	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Under 16 years	33	0	75	0	30	0	3	0
Above 16 years but not exceeding 40 years	234	19	343	13	354	11	246	2
Above 40 years but not exceeding 60 years	174	5	188	0	47	0	45	1
Above 60 years	36	3	55	0	18	1	12	0
Total	477	27	661	13	449	12	306	3

[1] Source: Superintendents of Bankura and Vishnupur Sub-jails.

CLASSIFICATION OF CONVICTS IN VISHNUPUR SUB-JAIL ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

Age-groups	1962		1963		1964		1965	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Under 16 years	0	0	7	2	1	0	1	0
Above 16 years but not exceeding 40 years	149	28	186	35	98	17	82	3
Above 40 years but not exceeding 60 years	44	2	56	7	29	3	19	1
Above 60 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total	193	30	249	44	128	20	105	4

It is clear from these tables that incidence of conviction is the highest on the 16-40 age-group and the least on the age-group under 16 years. Curiously, during the four years under review, there were, in the Vishnupur Sub-jail at least, more convicts in the age-group above 60 years than in the age-group below 16. Male convicts between 16 and 40 years comprised 63.17% and 77.43% of the total prison populations in Bankura and Vishnupur jails respectively over the same period. The incidence is also more marked on this age-group in case of female convicts. During the same period, women in this age-group accounted for 81.81% and 84.69% of the total number of female convicts in the Bankura and Vishnupur Sub-jails respectively. Another matter of special social significance is the relative percentage between the male and female convicts. During the four years under review, female convicts numbered only 2.95% of the males in Bankura jail and 14.5% of the males in Vishnupur jail.

Reformatory activities

We find from the Report on the Administration of Bengal (1926-27) that a Borstal School was opened at Bankura in 1927 as a reformatory institution for offenders of the 16-20 years' age-group. The erstwhile system of institutional reform has at present developed into a State-organized probation system in West Bengal under which juvenile delinquents are lodged with their legal guardians and their careers are closely watched by the District Probation Officers. This system has not yet been fully introduced in Bankura district. It appears, however, that in 1932 there were 301 boys in the Borstal School of whom 58 were admitted and 169 discharged during the same year leaving a carry-over of 132 for the next year. The discharge figure is significant inasmuch as it accounted for more than half the total inmates of the school and if the system had any effect on the students, reformation of so large a number was definitely heartening. The curriculum of the school included literary, technical, industrial, physical and religious education. A Boys Scouts' Group was formed in the school in 1932 and it became quite popular among the students. An After-care Association was also started with the object of keeping an eye on the discharged students and finding out suitable employ-

ments for them.[1] In 1950-51, the school was shifted from Bankura to Berhampore in Murshidabad district where it has been functioning since.[2] The present Bankura Sub-jail is housed in the old premises of the Borstal School and the building still bears its name.

Non-official Jail Visitors

There are two separate groups of non-official Jail Visitors for the two Sub-jails in the district, the members of which are drawn from the elite of the respective towns. Principals of colleges, Chairman of the Zilla Parishad, Members of the Legislative Assembly, Head Masters of local schools, social workers of the Rāmakrishna Mission and the like are represented on these bodies. Their primary duty is to meet the prisoners frequently and to ensure that all facilities provided by the Jail Code are made available to them.

ORGANIZATION OF CIVIL AND CRIMINAL COURTS

Civil justice: the District Judge

Old papers preserved in the District Record Room of Bankura reveal that there was a Judge's Court at Bankura as far back as November 1807. In fact, we find from the Administration Report of 1880-81 that the orders passed at the beginning of 1880 for the amalgamation of the District Judgeships of 'Bankoora' (West Burdwan) and East Burdwan with a view to appointing an additional Indian judge were cancelled towards the close of that year. Brojendra Kishore Seal, the Additional Judge, was appointed in 1880 to be the first District Judge of 'Bankoora' with powers of an Assistant Sessions Judge in the Sessions Division of Burdwan.[3] In 1887 he was vested with the powers of a Sessions Judge.[4]

The Subordinate Judges and Munsifs

There was a *Pradhān Sadar Āmin* or Subordinate Judge stationed at Bankura from 1833 to 1874. The post of a Subordinate Judge was revived from February 1880 and has existed since then. There were several Munsifi Courts scattered over the district, e.g. the Rādhānagar Munsifi from June 1834 to April 1870; Onda Munsifi from June 1834 to 1872; Sonamukhi Munsifi from 1821 to 1872; Barjora Munsifi from June 1834 to December 1873; Gangajalghati Munsifi from 1874 to 1893; Kotulpur Munsifi from 1836 to 1872 and again from 1879 to 1911; Jāhānābād Munsifi from July 1872 to September 1879 and Mādhabganj Munsifi from 1840 to 1853. In Vishnupur there was a Munsifi from 1871 onwards and an additional Munsifi from 1903 to 1936 and yet another from 1912 to 1926. It seems that from 1821 to 1892 there was one, from 1893 to 1899 two, and from 1900 onwards three Munsifis functioning in Bankura town. One of these was abolished in 1932 and since then there are two Munsifis at Bankura Sadar.

Civil justice: administrative set-up

The administrative set-up relating to civil justice in the district consists of the District and Sessions Judge, a Subordinate Judge at

[1] Report on the Administration of Bengal (1930-31). p. 24.
[2] Government of West Bengal, Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in West Bengal (1947-48 to 1951-52). p. 104.
[3] Report on the Administration of Bengal (1880-81), p. 4.
[4] Source: District and Sessions Judge, Bankura.

Bankura, two Munsifis at Bankura Sadar, one at Vishnupur and one at Khatra.[1] The Subordinate Judge is vested with the powers of an Assistant Sessions Judge and can try small cause case suits up to the value of Rs. 750 and deal with succession certificate cases under Sec. 388 (1) of the Indian Succession Act. He is also empowered to take cognizance of suits under Sec. 92 of the Civil Procedure Code and to try cases under the Provincial Insolvency Act. The present Munsif (First Court) at Sadar has powers to try suits under the ordinary procedure up to the value of Rs. 2,000 and the other Munsif (Second Court) can try suits up to the value of Rs. 3,500 and S.C.C. suits up to the value of Rs. 300. The Munsif at Vishnupur is authorized to try suits under the ordinary procedure up to the value of Rs. 3,500 and S.C.C. suits up to the value of Rs. 300. The Munsif at Khatra is empowered to try suits under the ordinary procedure up to the value of Rs. 3,500 and S.C.C. suits up to the value of Rs. 300.

Criminal justice: administrative set-up

Criminal justice is administered by the District and Sessions Judge, the Subordinate Judge at Sadar exercising powers of an Assistant Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate and Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates at Bankura and Vishnupur engaged in trying criminal cases. In 1965-66, the staff sanctioned for the district consisted of two Deputy Magistrates with 1st class powers, one Deputy Magistrate with 2nd or 3rd class powers in addition to one Sub-Deputy Magistrate with 2nd or 3rd class powers at Sadar besides the Sessions Judge, the Subordinate Judge and the District Magistrate. At Vishnupur, the Subdivisional Officer is a Subdivisional Magistrate with 1st class powers who is assisted by a Sub-Deputy Magistrate having 2nd or 3rd class powers. Apart from the stipendiary Magistrates, there are benches of Honorary Magistrates at Bankura and Vishnupur.

Union Benches: Union Courts: *Nyāya* Panchayats

There were 50 Union Benches and 49 Union Courts functioning in the Sadar subdivision prior to the enforcement of the West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1956. The corresponding figures for the Vishnupur subdivision were 24 and 24.[2] *Nyāya* Panchayats are yet to start functioning in the district.

Work-load of civil courts

The following tables[3] would indicate the work-load of civil courts in the district as also the number of various types of cases disposed of including money suits, execution cases and criminal appeals etc.

SUITS

Year	S.C.C.	Money	Rent	Title	Total
1945	985	467	9,419	977	11,748
1950	804	437	8,449	971	10,661

(Contd.)

[1] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.
[2] Government of West Bengal—List of Union Boards in West Bengal: 1955 (corrected up to September 1961).
[3] Source: District and Sessions Judge, Bankura.

SUITS (*Contd.*)

Year	S.C.C.	Money	Rent	Title	Total
1955	812	623	11,362	713	13,510
1956	690	563	7,594	1,020	9,867
1957	557	497	7,669	1,004	9,727
1958	531	433	6,508	875	8,347
1959	474	385	581	966	2,406
1960	390	269	101	1,161	1,921

CASES AND APPEALS

Year	Execution cases	Judl. Misc. cases	Non-Judl. cases	Regular appeals	Misc. appeals
1945	8,320	1,564	74	189	74
1950	6,532	1,444	66	255	68
1955	5,492	1,690	38	226	70
1956	5,433	1,722	18	213	88
1957	5,798	1,619	2	165	172
1958	5,673	1,521	3	240	51
1959	3,984	1,200	3	174	230
1960	3,278	879	2	129	325

CRIMINAL CASES, APPEALS AND MOTIONS
(Disposed of by the Court of Sessions)

Year	Sessions & Ref. cases	Criminal appeals	Criminal motions	Special Court cases
1945	57	91	41	—
1950	29	38	26	—
1955	37	96	36	3
1956	45	149	27	1
1957	31	103	31	5
1958	30	88	37	2
1959	34	103	30	18
1960	32	120	58	8

Litigation trends

Even a casual glance at the above figures would show that there has been a sharp fall in the number of civil suits, especially rent suits, in recent years. This is no doubt attributable to the operation of the Estates Acquisition Act. A further analysis may be made by taking 1958 and 1959 as the two representative years when there was a

decrease of 5,941 suits in all. The total value of suits instituted during 1959 amounted to only Rs. 18,34,984 against Rs. 58,52,116 in the previous year showing a decrease of Rs. 40,17,132. The decrease appears to be due mainly to filing of suits of lesser value.

Nature of suits

There were 5,057 suits for disposal during 1958 as compared to 1,130 in the preceding year. Excluding those that were transferred, 2,934 suits were disposed of during 1959 as against 9,359 in 1958 showing a decrease of 6,435. Of the 2,934 suits disposed of in 1959, 2,455 were by Munsifs as against 8,871 of this category in the preceding year. The average disposal of suits in a Munsif's court was 614 in 1959 as compared to 2,218 in the previous year. The percentage of suits disposed of after full trial by a Munsif under the ordinary procedure was 13.7 and under the S.C.C. procedure 14.1 of the total disposal under each head. The number of suits disposed of by the Subordinate Judge under the ordinary procedure was 110 and under the S.C.C. procedure 153 in 1959 as against 140 and 334 respectively in the previous year. Of these 15% and 61% respectively were contested in 1959.

The following table will show disposal of contested and uncontested suits by the District Judge, Subordinate Judge and the Munsifs during 1959 as compared to the previous year.[1]

Name of Court	Year	Contested	Uncontested
District Judge's Court	1958	1	13
	1959	2	14
Subordinate Judge's Court	1958	40	434
	1959	76	387
Munsifs' Courts	1958	600	8,218
	1959	337	2,118
Total	1958	641	8,665
	1959	415	2,519

State assistance

At present members of Scheduled Tribes involved in legal proceedings get the help of State lawyers and in some cases they are exempted from payment of court fees. Every person charged with an offence punishable with death, if unrepresented, gets legal assistance free of cost irrespective of his caste or creed.

Separation of judiciary from executive

Separation of the judiciary from the executive is yet to come into effect in West Bengal at the lower levels. Trying magistrates are under the administrative control of the District Magistrate although he is not their appellate authority. He, however, exercises con-

[1] Source : District Magistrate, Bankura.

current jurisdiction with the Sessions Judge regarding motions for revision. Since 1958, a functional separation between the executive and the judiciary is in operation under an executive order which enjoins that magistrates who try cases should be given judicial duties exclusively. But all magistrates still belong to the same cadre and their functions are interchangeable.

Work-load of criminal courts

The work-load of the criminal courts of the district can be assessed from the following table giving the number of cases disposed of between 1955 and 1959.

	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Bankura	4,239	3,712	4,518	3,577	3,555
Vishnupur	1,910	1,724	1,570	1,508	1,538

The cases generally are under the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Motor Vehicles Act etc.

Revenue cases

In addition to criminal cases, the District Magistrate has to attend to various proceedings falling within his revenue jurisdiction which are dealt with in a particular section of the D.M.'s office known as Revenue Munsikhānā. The types of such cases and their respective annual numbers over the 3-year period from 1957-58 to 1959-60 for which latest figures are available are given in the following table.[1]

Nature of cases	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60
Claim cases	920	620	457
B. T. Act cases	434	955	986
Miscellaneous cases	166	93	112
Rent control cases	611	647	593
Industrial loan cases	179	81	42
Stamp cases	79	93	87
Probate cases	15	13	12
Stamp impounding cases	15	5	2
Sericulture cases	56	—	—
Money lending cases	4	3	20
Evacuee properties cases	—	16	12
Foreign processes	103	69	54
Attached estates	9	9	9
Civil suits	11	20	29
Pauper suits	9	11	16
Rehabilitation finance	2	2	1
Civil decrees	2	—	—
Appeals	2	6	6

[1] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

Divorce

The operation of the Indian Divorce Act and the Hindu Marriages Act *vis-a-vis* the prevailing marital relations in the district provide interesting study. The following table[1] shows the number of divorce cases filed, decreed or rejected under the said Acts over a 14-year period from 1947 to 1960. The figures would tend to establish that divorces are far from being in vogue and although income-levels and education are on the increase, conventional ideas still hold the ground.

CASES UNDER THE INDIAN DIVORCE ACT

Year	Filed	Decreed	Rejected
1947	2	2	—

CASES UNDER THE HINDU MARRIAGES ACT

Year	Filed	Decreed	Rejected
1956	5	2	3
1957	6	—	6
1958	6	2	4
1959	4	—	4
1960	3	2	1

Legal profession and Bar Associations

There are five Bar Associations in the district, three of pleaders and two of mukhtars. The three Pleaders' Bars are located at Bankura, Vishnupur and Khatra and the two Mukhtars' Bars are located at Bankura and Vishnupur. The Bankura Mukhtars' Bar, which was established more than 75 years ago, has 57 members while that at Vishnupur has 19.[2] Under the new provisions when Mukhtars are gradually being enrolled as advocates, it is difficult to visualize the changes that will be brought about in the composition of these units in the near future. These Bar Associations, besides upholding the professional interests of their members, maintain certain charitable funds and have also acted as forums of public opinion. As is common in the mofussil towns of West Bengal, local leadership has often come from the legal profession and, over the years, several members of the Bar Associations of the district have sat in the State Legislative Assembly as representatives of the people.

[1] Source : District and Sessions Judge, Bankura.
[2] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

CHAPTER XII

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

BRIEF HISTORY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE DISTRICT

Having the commercial exploitation of the country as its principal aim, the East India Company utilized the administrative machinery as a convenient means to that end. This colonial policy continued from 1765 to 1858 during which long period the Company did practically nothing for rural upliftment in Bankura. With the transfer of administrative responsibility to the Crown in 1858, concessions in self-government began to be made, the earliest of which took shape in the district of Bankura in the formation of municipalities one after the other under the provisions of Act III of 1864 (District Municipal Improvement Act, 1864). The Bankura Municipality came into existence in 1869 and was closely followed by the Vishnupur and Sonamukhi municipalities which were established in 1873 and 1886 respectively. The District Road Cess Act of 1871 provided for the formation of a District Roads Committee and the Bengal Act III of 1885 (Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885) permitted the setting up of District Boards and Local Boards followed by Union Boards and Union Committees. In the first decade of the present century, the struggle for national liberation assumed momentous proportions leading to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and some slackening of administrative control over local bodies in the districts. With the coming of independence, people's participation in local self-government was accorded a fuller recognition through West Bengal Act I of 1957 (West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956) and West Bengal Act XXXV of 1963 (West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963) under the provisions of which Grām Panchayats, Anchal Panchayats, Ānchalik Parishads and the Zilla Parishad were formed in the district. The origin and growth of all these organs of local self-government in the district are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

MUNICIPALITIES

The Bankura Municipality

The Bankura Municipality had, during 1964-65, an area of 18.13 sq. km. (7 sq. miles), divided into 6 wards and inhabited by 62,673 persons (according to the Census of 1961) living in 10,099 houses and 10,475 households. The rate-payers numbered 10,742 and the total income and expenditure of the municipality were Rs. 5,85,993 and Rs. 5,22,311 respectively. As stated earlier, it came into existence on April 1, 1869. In 1876-77, the provisions of the Municipal Act of 1876 relating to conservancy etc. and registration of carts and levy of a tax on carriages, horses and animals were introduced in the

municipality. In 1879-80, the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal visited Bankura and his recommendations were accepted to the extent the funds permitted. Drainage was placed on a more satisfactory footing, public latrines were set up in some places where there was none or increased in number where they were insufficient, private latrines were better serviced, night-soil was trenched, the burial and burning arrangements came to be better regulated, promiscuous burials were stopped and the pauper-dead were disposed of in a more hygienic manner. Part IX of the Municipal Act, regarding the establishment and regulation of markets, was also brought into effect. The drainage was naturally good—the fall of the land being towards the two adjacent rivers Gandheswari and Dwarakeswar. In 1876, the municipality assumed control of certain dispensaries and hospitals within the municipal limits. A fire-brigade, largely assisted by local volunteers, was also formed in 1881-82. In 1882-83, street lighting was introduced for the first time and in the following year the provisions of the Compulsory Vaccination Act of 1880 were extended to the municipality. The provisions of the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885 were extended to Bankura from October 1, 1886 and by an executive order dated the 28th May 1886, the duty of registering births and deaths and the work of maintaining registers of vaccination operations under the Compulsory Vaccination Act were transferred from the police to the municipality with effect from July 1 of the same year.

Up to 1889-90, the people living within the Bankura Municipality suffered greatly for inadequate supply of drinking water. It was a custom with them to collect unfiltered water from the Gandheswari and the Dwarakeswar but when these rivers went dry during the hot season, they had to scoop out holes in the sandy beds of the rivers to get their supply of water. In view of this local distress, a loan of Rs. 5,000 was granted to the municipality in June 1890 which was utilized in sinking 6 tube-wells and excavating a tank in the centre of the town. In 1916-17, a water-rate was levied for the first time for further augmentation of the supply of drinking water. All these measures caused an improvement in the situation and we find that about this time the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division made a special mention of this municipality as a progressive and well-administered one. The situation, however, deteriorated in no time and in 1918-19 there was serious discontent in administrative circles about the working of the municipality. Following the supersession of the Burdwan and Hooghly-Chinsurah municipalities, which occurred about this time, the residents of Bankura formed a rate-payers' association and were successful in infusing new blood into the municipal administration. But this did not produce lasting results as in 1921-22 the District Magistrate of Bankura noted an absence of zeal among the authorities of the municipality. Factionalism and

group rivalries became rampant and in 1926-27 the District Officer reported that the condition of the roads, drains and street lights was very unsatisfactory. From April 1, 1928, the erstwhile tax on persons according to their circumstances was substituted by a rate on holdings. In 1935-36, consequent upon an outbreak of cholera, the municipality increased its expenditure on water supply by extending their pipe-lines and sinking more tube-wells.

After independence, the activities of the municipality have come to cover wider fields. The amenities provided by it in the various spheres in 1964-65 are described below.

Street lighting: In 1964-65, there were altogether 730 electric street lights maintained by the municipality, the power for which was supplied by the West Bengal Power Supply Co. Ltd.

Water supply: The source of water supply is the rivers Dwarakeswar and Gandheswari. Two electric pumps raise the water into four reservoirs in different parts of the town. The supply being inadequate the Public Health Engineering Directorate of the Government of West Bengal executed in 1950 a water supply scheme, known as the Bankura Water-works Remodelling Scheme, at a total cost of Rs. 7,34,081. For further augmentation of water supply and extension of the distribution system, another scheme was taken up in 1959 under the National Water Supply and Sanitation Programme to effect a supply of 7,50,000 gallons of water per day. The expenditure incurred on this scheme up to December 1965 was Rs. 4,78,180.

Drainage: The municipality maintains 83.72 km. (52 miles) of drains, 27.37 km. (17 miles) of which are pucka and the remaining 56.35 km. (35 miles) kutcha. Both types of drains are cleared by the municipal sweepers.

Sanitation: General sanitation within the municipal area being tolerably good, there has been no serious outbreak of any water-borne or air-borne diseases like cholera, typhoid and small-pox in the recent past.

Vaccination & Dispensaries: In 1951-52, 34,363 persons were vaccinated through municipal agencies. The corresponding figures for 1961-62 and 1964-65 were 55,973 and 51,012 respectively. The municipality maintains a homoeopathic charitable dispensary and gives aid to two similar institutions.

Roads: 48.3 km. (30 miles) of metalled and 5.79 km. (3.6 miles) of unmetalled roads are maintained by the municipality.

Education: There are 6 free Primary schools and a *mukhtab* run by the municipality. Besides, it gives aid to 37 Primary schools.

The comparative data given below regarding population, number of rate-payers, income and expenditure of the municipality under important 'heads' in 1901-02 and 1961-62 would indicate the progress made by it over this period of 60 years.

	1901-02	1961-62
Population	20,666	62,673
Number of rate-payers	2,641	10,397
Total income (excluding opening balance)	Rs. 14,165	Rs. 4,38,564
Total expenditure (excluding 'extraordinary' expenses & debts)	Rs. 14,157	Rs. 4,32,875
Income from municipal rates & taxes	Rs. 9,964	Rs. 3,10,157
Expenditure on public health and conveniences	Rs. 10,282	Rs. 3,13,217
Expenditure on public instruction	Rs. 615	Rs. 21,892
General administration & collection charges	Rs. 1,873	Rs. 63,703

In 1964-65, the main source of income of the municipality was the municipal rates and taxes accounting for a total collection of Rs. 3,76,729. The main 'head' of expenditure was public health and conveniences for which Rs. 3.79,543 was spent. During the same year, the municipality incurred an expenditure of Rs. 34,584 on public instructions.

The Vishnupur Municipality

In 1964-65, the Vishnupur Municipality had an area of 20.72 sq. km. (8 sq. miles), divided into 4 wards and inhabited by 30,958 persons (Census 1961) living in 5,630 houses and 5,594 households. It had 12 Commissioners (elected for a term of 4 years and entitled to choose a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from amongst themselves) and 5,819 rate-payers. In the same year, its total income and total expenditure amounted to Rs. 1,76,946 and Rs. 2,09,879 respectively.

The municipality was established on September 1, 1873. From a survey of its activities over the years we find that in 1880-81 the Commissioners resolved to provide the town with a suitable number of thatched latrines. Three new roads were constructed during the same year. The Vishnupur fire-brigade was organized next year. In 1883-84, the Compulsory Vaccination Act of 1880 was extended to the municipality and in the following year it was permitted to levy fees, not exceeding Rs. 4 for a year or Rs. 2 for a half-year, for the registration of all carts kept or habitually used within the municipal area. Under Act III of 1884, two old tanks excavated by the Malla kings and known as Krishnabāndh and Jumnabāndh, came within the municipal jurisdiction with effect from April 1, 1885. Under other provisions of the same Act, powers were conferred on 6 Ward Committees, appointed during 1886-87, for assessment of municipal rates, inspection of conservancy of the town, supervision of road repairs and registration of births and deaths. The Commissioner of the Burdwan Division, however, reported at the time that the scheme did not work satisfactorily as very little was done by the Commissioners. Although there was a mention in the Annual Administra-

tion Report of Bengal for 1887-88 that the municipality had discharged its sanitary functions more or less satisfactorily, the then Commissioner of the Division reported in 1891-92 that the administration of the municipality was decidedly bad. The defects he pointed out were factious quarrels, inadequate taxation badly distributed among the tax-payers, bad collection of rates with heavy arrears, excessive support to higher and insufficient support to lower education, a tendency to spend too much on establishment, too little attention to keep the town and the latrines clean and no disposition to make any arrangement for improved sanitation. In 1896-97, licence fees for offensive and dangerous trades were levied by the municipality for the first time. Inefficient administration came to be noticed again in 1921-22 when the District Magistrate reported that there was an absence of initiative and zeal for civic progress. In 1923-24, the Divisional Commissioner noted that the roads were not well maintained and the conservancy arrangements were not sufficient. The District Magistrate had to send another adverse report in 1927-28 about the roads, drains, sanitation and water supply and the position took a turn for the better. In 1934-35, the municipality sank two new masonry wells.

After independence, the municipality was placed on a better footing. The various civic amenities provided by it in 1964-65 are enumerated below.

Water supply: Piped water supply is not available for paucity of funds. The municipality, however, maintains 29 tube-wells and 96 ring-wells.

Lighting: There are 279 electric lights and 192 kerosene lights for illuminating the streets.

Drainage: There is no proper drainage system; all the roadside drains are kutcha.

Sanitation and vaccination: Sanitation and vaccination services are fairly good. The municipality looks after the clearance of roads, drains and service privies. Shops, restaurants and hotels are also inspected. Vaccination, both primary and re-vaccination, is a regular municipal function.

Roads: There are in all about 48.3 km. (30 miles) of roads. The width of the main roads is usually 6.1 metres (20 ft.) and they run for an approximate total length of 7.25 km. (4½ miles). Surfacing of 1,998 metres (6,550 ft.) of road by cement concrete and 1,220 metres (4,000 ft.) by tarmac has been taken up recently.

Education: There are 18 aided Primary schools within the municipal area. The municipality also pays grants-in-aid to the K.G. Engineering Institute, the Sibdas Girls' Higher Secondary School and the Debendra Memorial School of Physical Culture.

The comparative figures tabulated below would illustrate the general progress made by the municipality over a period of 60 years from 1901-02 to 1961-62.

		1901-02		1961-62
Population		19,090		30,958
Number of rate-payers		2,688		5,792
Total income (excluding opening balance)	Rs.	7,628	Rs.	1,47,109
Total expenditure (excluding 'extraordinary' expenses & debts)	Rs.	7,675	Rs.	1,11,372
Municipal rates & taxes	Rs.	5,439	Rs.	88,048
Expenditure on public health & conveniences	Rs.	4,708	Rs.	65,741
Expenditure on public instruction	Rs.	778	Rs.	4,587
General administration & collection charges	Rs.	935	Rs.	25,592

In 1964-65, collections from municipal rates and taxes were Rs. 89,982 while expenditures on public health and convenience and public instruction rose to Rs. 1,46,493 and Rs. 8,732 respectively.

The Sonamukhi Municipality

The Sonamukhi Municipality had, during 1964-65, an area of 11.65 sq. km. (4½ sq. miles) divided into 12 wards and inhabited by 15,027 persons (Census 1961) living in 5,424 houses and 2,863 households. It had 12 Commissioners (elected for a term of 4 years and entitled to choose a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from amongst themselves) and 3,160 rate-payers. The total income and total expenditure of the municipality were Rs. 46,283 and Rs. 47,201 respectively.

The municipality came into existence in 1886-87 when the Commissioners obtained the sanction of Government to impose fees for the registration of carts within the municipal area. The supply of water was obtained from several tanks and from the river Sali. Since 1887-88, the municipality took over from the police the duty relating to registration of births and deaths and has also been maintaining registers of vaccination operations. In 1891-92, functions relating to conservancy were extended to the municipality. The Commissioner of the Burdwan Division, however, regretted at that time that the administration of the municipality was decidedly bad. But in 1894-95, there was an appreciable improvement in the municipal administration. In 1895-96, licence fees for offensive and dangerous trades were levied for the first time. In 1911-12, the elective system for selection of Commissioners was extended to Sonamukhi. In 1923-24, the Divisional Commissioner of Burdwan reported that the condition of the municipality was not satisfactory. In 1926-27, the District Magistrate observed that the condition of the roads, drains and lighting was bad. In 1935-36, the tax on persons was replaced by a rate on holdings in accordance with the provision of the new Municipal Act.

The present (1964-65) activities of the municipality are summarized below.

Roads: The municipality maintains 10.47 km. (6.5 miles) of metalled and 20.45 km. (12.7 miles) of unmetalled roads.
Water supply: The municipality maintains 40 wells for the purpose. Water is also drawn from tanks in the town and the Sali river.
Public health: For maintaining public health, the municipality undertakes vaccination, inoculation, cleaning of roads and removal of night-soils etc.
Education: Besides giving aid to several public institutions, the Commissioners at a meeting held on 25.1.65 adopted a resolution to introduce free and compulsory primary education within the municipal area with effect from April 1, 1965.

The following comparative figures would indicate the general progress made by this municipality between 1901-02 and 1961-62.

	1901-02	1961-62
Population	13,448	15,045
Number of rate-payers	1,915	3,136
Total income	Rs. 5,781	Rs. 37,537
Income from rates & taxes	Rs. 4,687	Rs. 25,206
Total expenditure	Rs. 6,255	Rs. 38,693
Expenditure on public health & conveniences	Rs. 4,006	Rs. 12,860
Expenditure on public instruction	Rs. 667	Rs. 1,488
Establishment & collection charges	Rs. 977	Rs. 13,693

In 1964-65, collections from municipal rates and taxes were Rs. 33,183 and establishment and collection charges were Rs. 11,768.

The District Road Committee

The first step towards the formation of District Boards was taken in Bengal when on the recommendation of a committee presided over by V.H. Schealch, the District Road Cess Act was passed in July 1871. Under its provisions, Road Cess Committees were set up in each district, Bankura being one of them, presided over by the respective District Officers and with members drawn from all parts of the district. During the years when the District Road Committees were in existence, none of the members was elected; nomination was universally in vogue. It was for these Committees to determine the rates at which road cess was to be levied. With the passing of the Local Self-Government Act of 1885, the District Road Committees were replaced by District Boards.

DISTRICT, LOCAL AND UNION BOARDS

Roads, bridges, channels, buildings etc. looked after by the erstwhile District Road Committee, were thus placed under the control of the District Board. The responsibility for maintenance and management of Government Middle English and Middle

The District Board

Vernacular schools and the administration of grants-in-aid for Primary schools were vested in the District Board, the District Committee of Public Instruction being placed under it. In 1888-89, the number of Primary schools decreased in Bankura which was attributable to the District Board giving less subventions to *pāṭh-sālās*. In 1892-93, the responsibility for maintenance and repair of buildings in Bankura which were under Executive Engineers of the respective Divisions and for Central buildings like post offices, telegraph offices etc. was made over to the District Board and placed in charge of the District Engineer. The funds necessary for the purpose were also transferred to the Board at the same time. In 1893-94, Provident Fund facilities were extended to the employees of the Board. Around 1896-97, an enquiry was undertaken by the Government to find out the sufficiency of rural water supply throughout the province and the Bankura District Board was found to have discharged its duties in this behalf properly. The Commissioner of the Burdwan Division, in his Annual Report for 1902-03, reported that the performance of the Board during the year was creditable. In 1908-09, it was permitted to make contributions to secondary and other schools under private management and towards the maintenance of hostels, while the constitution of an Education Committee was also provided for. In respect of medical work, authority was given to the Board to train and employ compounders and midwives and the funds for veterinary work were greatly augmented. In 1914, the Board was statutorily empowered to sanction scholarships for furtherance of technical or any other form of specialized education in institutions within the district and, with the approval of the Government, in institutions outside it. In 1926-27, the Board made a small beginning in tackling the problem of leprosy, the scourge of the district. In 1929-30, the Board's hostility to the Union Board movement led to the replacement of its Chairman by a nominated non-official and after the latter's death, the District Magistrate took his place.

Around 1930's, the Board used to have 24 members, 16 of whom were elected by the Local Boards at Bankura and Vishnupur and the remaining 8 were nominated by the Government. In 1948, the Board was re-constituted with 20 elected members, the system of Government nomination being entirely abolished by that time. After the delimitation of constituencies, the Board was re-constituted in 1956 with 24 elected members. It continued to function till it was replaced by the Zilla Parishad. The periodicity of District Board elections was at first three years, which became four and then five years.

The Board had a Chairman who used to preside over its meetings and was responsible for the execution of all its work. Up to 1920, the District Magistrate was invariably appointed as the Chairman but from 1921 the Board was allowed to elect a Chairman of its own.

The Board had certain Standing Committees, some of which were statutory while others were constituted at the discretion of the Board. The statutory Finance Committee dealt with all financial matters, prepared budget estimates and audited the accounts. The Education Committee, another statutory body, dealt with matters relating to education up to the junior high school standard. The third statutory committee was on Public Health which looked after health and sanitation. The non-statutory Committees were those relating to Public Works, Ferries and Union Boards.

The Bankura District Board was mainly dependant upon the Roads and P. W. Cess receipts for its revenues. Since the implementation of the Estates Acquisition Act, however, the Government had been paying a subvention in lieu of Road and P. W. Cess to the extent of Rs. 2,00,200 a year. Besides, Government used to advance grants for the running of dispensaries, for anti-leprosy work as also for paying dearness allowances to its employees. Government also used to pay to the Board a part of the proceeds of the Motor Vehicle Tax for improvement of roads and another amount for the benefit of the Public Health staff. The Board's income also came from leasing out *bāndhs* and ferries, roadside lands, as also from bungalow rents and licence fees for holding fairs.

The following comparative figures would give an idea of the income and expenditure of the Bankura District Board in 1901-02 and 1964-65.

	1901-02 (in Rs.)	1964-65 (in Rs.)
Total income	1,19,956	3,37,378
Total expenditure	1,34,085	3,88,019
Income from Provincial Rate	46,903	2,02,520
Income from education fees from M. E. schools etc.	1,129	5,200
Income from civil works	13,638	79,071
Expenditure on civil works	63,124	2,00,838
Expenditure for medical purposes	3,042	53,377
Expenditure on education	32,721	25,959
Establishment charges	4,259	30,674

Local Boards

There were two Local Boards in the district, one for each subdivision. As agents of the District Board, they had mainly to maintain and repair roads within their respective jurisdictions. These bodies were abolished in June 1940.

Union Boards

Bengal Act V of 1919 provided for the establishment of Union Boards. Bankura had 183 of them; 129 within Sadar and the remain-

ing 54 within Vishnupur subdivision. A Union Board usually included 10 to 20 villages and its President and the Vice-President (when there was one) were elected from among its members who, in their turn, were elected by eligible voters. The functions of these Boards were to establish and manage primary schools, look after village roads, bridges and waterways, supervise rural sanitation and public health measures, levy rates upon all owners or occupiers of buildings within the Union and collect revenue from local pounds and ferries. They also received grants from the District Board.

PANCHAYATI INSTITUTIONS

Grām Panchayats

The West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1956 provides for the setting up of Grām Panchayats and Anchal Panchayats. As the smallest territorial unit, a Grām Panchayat, normally, has for its jurisdiction a revenue mauza with an approximate population of 1,000. The number of its members varies from 9 to 15 who usually hold office for 4 years. They elect one amongst them as the *Adhyaksha* and another as the *Upādhyaksha*. For every Grām Panchayat, there is a Grām Panchayat Fund to which are credited the sum or sums assigned to it under the provisions of the Act as also any gifts or contributions received and income derived from endowments and trusts made in favour of it.

The table below shows the number of Grām Panchayats constituted in certain block areas of the district during the Second Plan period as also their combined receipts and disbursements for 1960-61.

Name of Block	No. of Grām Panchayats	Total Receipts (Rs.)	Total Disbursements (Rs.)
Gangajalghati	64	(Figures not available)	
Ranibandh	56	13,008	13,008
Barjora	53	9,544	2,587
Saltora	55	18,597	13,448
Patrasayer	52	15,820	13,316

During the Third Plan period, no new Grām Panchayat was formed in Gangajalghati, Ranibandh, Saltora and Patrasayer block areas but seven more were added to the Barjora block. The table below gives the number of Grām Panchayats constituted in 10 blocks of the district during this period together with their joint receipts and disbursements for the year 1965-66. (In 7 other blocks, namely Mejia, Joypur, Khatra I, Chhatna, Simlapal, Indpur and Raipur II, 32, 56, 45, 91, 46, 62 and 56 Grām Panchayats respectively were formed during the same period but their combined receipt and disbursement figures are not available).

Name of Block	No. of Grām Panchayats	Total Receipts (Rs.)	Total Disbursements (Rs.)
Vishnupur	47	18,912	16,893
Bankura I	45	8,152	7,027
Indas	60	92,528	86,813
Bankura II	58	5,160	4,200 (approx.)
Raipur I	59	9,352	9,342
Kotulpur	63	8,655	6,484
Onda	66	21,007	21,007
Sonamukhi	59	14,000	9,000 (approx.)
Khatra II	40	5,000	6,500
Taldangra	50	9,563	5,681

Anchal Panchayats

Eight to ten contiguous Grām Panchayats with a total population of about 10,000 constitute an Anchal Panchayat. Each of the constituent Grām Panchayat elects 2 to 3 members to the Anchal Panchayat Every Anchal Panchayat elects one of its members to be its *Pradhān* and another to be its *Upa-Pradhān* to hold office for four years. There is besides a stipendiary secretary for attending to the day-to-day work of the organization. Each Anchal Panchayat administers a fund to which is credited contributions made by the State Government as also any tax, toll, fee or rate levied and collected by it under the Act.

The table below gives the blockwise numbers of Anchal Panchayats and their combined receipt and disbursement figures for 1965-66. (In 10 other blocks, namely Mejia, Joypur, Khatra I, Chhatna, Simlapal, Indpur, Gangajalghati, Raipur II, Ranibandh and Saltora, 5, 9, 6, 12, 7, 7, 10, 8, 8 and 8 Anchal Panchayat respectively were formed but their combined receipt and disbursement figures are not available).

Name of Block	No. of Anchal Panchayats	Total Receipts (Rs.)	Total Disbursements (Rs.)
Vishnupur	9	45,442	39,302
Bankura I	5	33,245	32,745
Indas	8	51,216	51,216
Bankura II	7	35,400	31,090
Raipur I	8	50,948	50,061
Kotulpur	8	51,820	43,150
Onda	14	30,022	30,022
Barjora	11	72,766	52,999
Khatra II	5	28,520	28,115
Patrasayer	9	64,168	60,105
Sonamukhi	10	50,000	45,000
Taldangra	9	42,764	39,204

Ānchalik Parishads

There are 22 Ānchalik Parishads, set up une drthe West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, corresponding to the 22 blocks in the district, of which 16 are in Sadar and 6 in Vishnupur subdivision. Each Ānchalik Parishad has a President and a Vice-President elected by the members from among themselves for a period of four years. The Block Development Officers are *ex-officio* Chief Executive Officers of the respective Ānchalik Parishads. Each Ānchalik Parishad works through certain Standing Committees and has a fund to which are credited contributions, grants or loans made by the Central or the State Government or the Zilla Parishad and all receipts on account of tolls, rates and fees levied by it.

Zilla Parishad

The Bankura Zilla Parishad started functioning on October 2, 1964 and has 45 members including 3 women. Thirty-six members are Hindus, 6 belong to the Scheduled Castes while 3 are from the Scheduled Tribes. Elected by the members from among themselves, a Chairman, assisted by a Vice-Chairman, is in overall charge of the organization for four years. A Deputy Magistrate, designated as the Executive Officer, looks after the day-to-day administration and the District Panchayat Officer, Bankura, another Deputy Magistrate, acts as the *ex-officio* Secretary. Both the Subdivisional Officers are associate members of the Parishad which has certain Standing Committees on Finance and Establishment, Public Health, Public Works, Agriculture and Irrigation, Industry and Co-operation and Social Welfare etc. The Parishad administers a fund to which are credited contributions, grants, loans etc. from the Central or the State Government, the proceeds of road cess levied in the district, all receipts on account of tolls, rates and fees levied by the Parishad etc. The following is an abstract of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Parishad for 1965-66.

RECEIPTS		EXPENDITURE	
Head	Amount (Rs.)	Head	Amount (Rs.)
Rent of fisheries	3,000	Executive Officer's establishment, Office establishment, Travelling Allowances etc.	60,852
Cess on land	2,73,720	Fees to pleaders etc.	600
Fees from schools etc.	6,830	Education	30,168
Contribution from Provincial Revenue for medical affairs	18,607	Hospitals & dispensaries etc.	65,656
Licence fees from fairs	400	Leprosy establishment	35,472
Miscellaneous	23,800		

(Contd.)

RECEIPTS		EXPENDITURE	
Head	Amount (Rs.)	Head	Amount (Rs.)
Civil works	50,682		
Debts, deposits and advances	21,500	Superannuation allowances, pensions, grants etc.	11,000
Total	3,98,539	Printing & stationery	500
Opening Balance	70,188		
Grand Total	4,68,727	Miscellaneous: Contribution to other local funds etc.	18,550
		Famine relief	1,500
		Civil & Public works	2,16,450
		Debts, deposits & advances	18,000
		Total	4,48,848
		Closing Balance	19,879
		Grand Total	4,68,727

The Panchayat organizations attend to various functions of which the following are important.

Civic functions

The civic functions include village sanitation, public health, water supply, maintenance of buildings, regulation of transport, collection and disposal of refuse, filling up of disused wells and unsanitary pools, maintenance of public wells, prevention of pollution of water-sources, regulation of slaughter-houses and markets and upkeep of village roads and waterways.

Social functions

Under social functions may be listed facilities provided for education, physical culture and recreation grounds, conduct of fairs and festivals, encouragement of folk drama and dancing, establishment of museums, reading rooms, libraries etc.

Economic functions

Panchayats act as agencies for supply of agricultural implements and improved seeds. They also work for improvement of livestock, better organization of cottage industries, introduction of co-operative farming and setting up of co-operative stores etc.

Police functions

Police functions are performed by rural Dafadars and Chowkidars whose duties include watch and ward, prevention of crime, protection of life and property etc. The number of Dafadars and Chowkidars attached to the various Ânchalik Parishads in the district and the contributions made by the State Government towards their maintenance are shown in the table overleaf.

Name of Anchalik Parishad	No. of Dafadars	No. of Chowkidars	Government contribution towards salaries of Dafadars and Chowkidars during 1965-66 (Rs.)
Bankura I	5	50	9,100
Bankura II	6	65	12,493
Chhatna	12	99	17,507
Onda	10	85	14,750
Mejia	5	49	11,613
Saltora	8	73	13,805
Gangajalghati	10	83	15,293
Khatra I	6	45	13,550
Khatra II	5	47	8,855
Raipur I	8	74	14,283
Raipur II	8	60	12,318
Ranibandh	8	64	12,728
Simlapal	7	53	15,885
Taldangra	9	62	13,675
Indpur	7	70	13,529
Vishnupur	10	77	13,675
Joypur	10	91	21,185
Kotulpur	15	93	22,506
Patrasayer	11	81	15,620
Indas	11	96	14.200
Sonamukhi	10	75	14,000
Barjora	11	92	19,749

CHAPTER XIII

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Historical background

Writing in 1863, J. E. Gastrell quoted a Deputy Collector's remarks, made in 1847, about the sad plight of education in the district which stated : "Education is very little attended to. Few indeed can do more than write their names even in towns. In the villages education may be said to be entirely neglected. In the towns, children of trades-people attend the *Gooroo Muhāsoy* (Pundit's school) until they understand common accounts."[1] Speaking about his own times Gastrell added: "Such being the case, education as might be expected is neither sought after nor thought of by the lower classes. Few can read. still fewer write." In 1876, Hunter almost echoed Gastrell in the following words: "In a backward and poor district like Bankura, it is not surprising that education should have made but little progress as compared with richer parts of the country."[2] Education in the district in the 19th century, as is evident from these remarks, was at a very low level.

Character of mediaeval learning

So far as the extensiveness of education was concerned, the situation must have been similar before the East India Company assumed the administrative control of the district. None other than a Brahmin could aspire for education through the Sanskrit medium, which necessarily used to be imparted by Brahmin pundits. Other economically powerful *dwija-varna* castes like the Kshatriyas, Chhetris, Rajputs and Vaidyas, on whose benevolence the learned Brahmins had to depend a lot, were, however, exempted from this taboo. Brahmins were also not averse to imparting knowledge of arithmetic and accounts to the trading castes belonging to the *Nabasākha srenis*. But the vast multitudes of people belonging to the *jal-achal* castes, the tribes and other depressed communities lived in the darkness of ignorance. But so far as cultivation of learning among the privileged few was concerned, the situation in the area now forming the Bankura district during the middle and late mediaeval times was not perhaps as bleak as it was in the 19th century. The Brahmins, and occasionally a few non-Brahmins of the *dwija-varna* castes, constituted the privileged section and enjoyed educational benefits in the shape of grants of rent-free lands for the unhampered continuance

[1] J. E. Gastrell—Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah. Calcutta, 1863.

[2] W. W. Hunter—A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV. London, 1876. p. 293.

of their scholarly pursuits. The Malla kings of Vishnupur were great patrons of traditional learning. Over wide areas throughout their kingdom they settled learned Brahmins with grants of rent-free lands who established *ṭols*, *chatuspāṭhis*, *pāṭhsālās* etc. and carried on such other scholarly activities as were suitable for the advancement of learning. The Vishnupur princes also retained a large number of scholars as their court pundits.

Hundreds of hand-written manuscripts on country-made paper, palm leaves etc. recovered from several centres situated in the district and preserved in the Asiatic Society Library and the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad Library in Calcutta, the Visva-Bhārati University MSS. Department at Sāntiniketan and the archives of the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad testify to the wide diffusion of education in the district during the middle and late mediaeval periods. The earliest manuscript found in the district was copied in the Saka year 1390, i.e. 1468 A.D. Although it is true that the levels of scholarship attained at these seats of learning never reached those at the centres situated on the banks of the Bhāgirathi, it may nevertheless be safely presumed that scholarly pursuits in the district, at least in several branches of study, had a long history.

Chandidāsa

Material proof of the cultivation of learning in the district even before 1468 A.D. is not entirely lacking. The one and only manuscript of the 15th century[1] narrative poem *Srikrishnakirtana* by Baḍu Chandidāsa[2] was discovered in 1909 by Basantaranjan Ray Vidwadballava from the cowshed of a Brahmin, a descendant of the family of the daughter of the Vaishnava saint Srinivāsa Āchārya, in the village of Kākilyā. The discovery sparked off one of the most heated literary controversies in Bengal centring round the two points: (*i*) whether Chandidāsa, the writer of the *Srikrishnakirtana*, was identifiable with the more famous Vaishnava lyric and devotional poet bearing the same name, and (*ii*) whether Chhātnā in Bankura or Nānnoor in Birbhum was his place of origin. The controversy has not yet been fully resolved and one of the original exponents of the theory that Nānnoor in Birbhum was Chandidāsa's native place is now inclined to revise his opinion, subject to further investigations in the matter, in favour of a third place, namely Ketugrām in Burdwan from where the poet came to live at Nānnoor later in his life. The consensus of opinion among scholars is, however, in favour of regarding Chandidāsa of *Srikrishnakirtana* fame and Chandidāsa of the *Padāvalis* as two different persons and accepting Chhātnā as

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[1] Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānglā Sāhityer Itibritta*, Vol. I. (2nd Edn.), Calcutta, 1963. p. 304.

[2] ibid. p. 290. Chandidāsa, the composer of Vaishnava lyrics, described himself at the end of his *padas* as Dwija or Deena Chandidāsa. In *Srikrishnakirtana* the author describes himself as Baḍu/Anantabaḍu/Bāsuli-worshipper Chandidāsa. The consensus of opinion among scholars is to regard them as different persons.

the place of residence of Bāsuli-worshipper Anantabaḍu or Baḍu Chandidāsa of *Srikrishnakirtana* and Nānnoor in Birbhum as the native place of Dwija or Deena Chandidāsa of the Vaishnava lyrics. But in view of the identical nature of some of the *padas* of Dwija Chandidāsa and certain passages occurring in the *Srikrishnakirtana*, this conclusion is not entirely free from doubt. Some scholars have expressed misgivings about the authenticity of the *Srikrishnakirtana* text itself while others have questioned the date of the text, which is commonly ascribed to the early part of the 15th century.[1]

Rāmāi Pundit

Rāmāi Pundit, the author of *Sunya-Purāna*, who declared himself to be a contemporary of Karnasena, a vassal of the Pāla king Devapāla, may be regarded, on the strength of the above claim, to have been alive some time during the 9th century. But the copies of the text of *Sunya-Purāna*, so far discovered, do not take the text earlier than the latter part of the 16th century. *Sunya-Purāna* is a text concerning the theology and rituals of *Dharma* worship. From the circumstantial evidence of the existence in the village of Maynāpur in Joypur police station of five important *Dharma* deities and of a family of *Dharma* worshippers claiming direct descent from Rāmāi Pundit, it may be inferred that it is the same Maynāpur referred to by the author of *Sunya-Purāna* as his birth place.[2]

According to tradition, Bir Hāmbir, the Malla king, was a great patron of learning. Legend has it that Srinivāsa and other Vaishnava devotees once left Brindāvan for Nabadwip with a number of religious manuscripts which were robbed on the way by Bir Hāmbir. When Srinivāsa appeared before the king, he, however, found the latter listening to the reading of the *Bhramara Gitā* by his court pundit, Sri Vyāsāchārya. Srinivāsa thought upon a plan to convert the pundit first into the Vaishnava creed whereupon, he thought, it would be easier for him to gain the confidence of the king himself. And thus Vyāsāchārya became his first disciple in Mallabhum followed by Bir Hāmbir who became an ardent convert to the *Gauḍiya Vaishnava Bhakti* religion.[3] Two Vaishnava lyrical compositions are attributed to him and are to be found in the *Bhaktiratnākara* besides an anthology of Vaishnava lyrics, the *Karnānanda*.

Evidence of manuscripts

Evidence of manuscripts, discovered from the district so far, provides the most reliable basis for the reconstruction of the history of learning in the district in mediaeval times. The manuscripts

[1] Sukumar Sen—*Bāngālā Sāhityer Itihās*, Vol. I, Part I. (3rd Edn.). Calcutta, 1959, pp. 127-74. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bāngla Sāhityer Itibritta*, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1963. pp. 280-348, S. K. Chatterjee—The Origin and Development of Bengali Language. Calcutta, 1926. Numerous other articles by Basantaranjan Ray Vidwadballava, Jogesh Chandra Ray Vidyanidhi, Harekrishna Mukhopadhyay Sāhityaratna, Satyakinkar Sāhānā and Muhammad Sahidullah in *Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā* on this controversy may be referred to.

[2] Asutosh Bhattacharyya—*Bāngla Mangal Kāvyer Itihās* (3rd Edn). Calcutta, 1959, pp. 585-604.

[3] Conversion of Bir Hāmbir has also been dealt with in the portion on Mediaeval History in Chapter II.

relate to a wide variety of subjects including *Vyākarana* (grammar), *Nyāya* (logic), *Smriti* (law and manners), *Kāvya* (poetry and poetics), *Kāmasāstra* (erotics), *Purāna* (theology and mythology) and *Jyotisha* (astrology and astronomy). Most of them are copies of well-known earlier works but original commentaries on the old texts and original works are not altogether rare.

Centres of learning

From the large number of places yielding manuscripts on such subjects as *Vyākarana* and *Nyāya*, the inference becomes inevitable that these branches of knowledge were cultivated at those places. Similarly, the discovery of copies of standard works on *Jyotisha* from various localities leads to the conclusion that there were many centres within the district where the Indian systems of astrology and astronomy were seriously studied. The dates mentioned in the manuscripts give an approximate idea about the time when the respective centres flourished. Some of the important centres of learning in the district along with brief descriptions of the notable manuscripts found at each place are listed below.

Vishnupur: Several localities of the town flourished as important centres of learning under the patronage of the Malla kings. Manuscripts and family histories point out Kādākuli-Biswāspārā, Mahāpātrapārā, Bāgispārā and Vidyāsāgarpārā, in and around the town, as important seats of learning. One of the earliest manuscripts discovered from Mahāpātrapārā was a copy of the *Vishnupurāna*, dated 1446 Sakāvda which is equivalent to 1524 A.D. A scion of the locally resident family of Mādhavachandra Devasarmā has bequeathed to the Vishnupur Sāhitya Parishad more than a hundred manuscripts which include copies of *Prākrita Paingala*, *Brihat Samhitā* of Barāhamihira, *Dāyabhāga* of Jimutavāhana and other texts on *Kāvya*, *Nyāya*, *Jyotisha* and *Smriti*. One of the ancestors of Mādhavachandra had copied the *Lingānusāsana* section of the *Amarkosha* in Sakāvda 1589 (1667 A.D.). Mādhavachandra himself copied the *Bhattikāvyam* in 1785 Sakāvda corresponding to 1863 A.D. He also made copies of the *Amarkosha* and the *Samkhiptasāra Vyākarana* while other scholars belonging to the family wrote commentaries on *Kāvya*, *Smriti* and *Nyāya*. Other manuscripts recovered at Vishnupur include a commentary on *Kāvyaprakāsa* by Jādavendra Vaidik (1785 A.D.); *Sandhivadārtha*, a grammar by Āchārya Gopāl Chakrabarti (1821 A.D.); a commentary on the *Kridantapada* section of *Samkshiptasāra Vyākaruna* by Nyāyapanchānan (1785 A.D.) and the Mahābhārata of Vedavyāsa, copied in the Saka year 1583 (1661 A.D.).

Chhābrā: About two hundred manuscripts have been recovered from this small village in Onda police station, half of which came from one family. These include copies of *Hamsaduta*, *Rasakadamba*, *Lalitamādhava*, *Vidagdhamādhava*, *Samkshiptasāra Vyākarana*, *Brihat Samhitā* and *Surya Siddhānta* (on astrology), texts on *Āyurveda*

(medicine) and Vaishnava texts. One Chaitanya Dās of this village had written a commentary on Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* in Saka 1716 (1794 A.D.). During the reign of Durjan Singh, one Rāmcharan Chakrabarti of this village translated the *Aswamedhaparva* of the Mahābhārata into Bengali.

Pāikpārā: More than a hundred manuscripts have been traced from this village, about half of which was the property of a local Brahmin. These include copies of *Pavanaduta* of Dhoyi, *Meghduta* and *Ritusamhāra* of Kālidāsa, *Kāvya* (poetics) of Ghaṭakarpara, *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva and texts on *Nyāya*, *Vyākarana* and *Alamkāra*.

Pātrabākhrā: This small village near Rāmsāgar in the Vishnupur police station yielded a number of manuscripts on *Jyotisha*, *Vyākarana*, *Kāvya* and *Nyāya* which were collected from the custody of two local Brahmin families.

Jaykrishnapur: One Āsutosh Āchārya of this village in the Vishnupur police station made a grant of more than one hundred manuscripts to the Vishnupur Sāhitya Parishad among which are the *Kāvyādarsa* of Dandi (poetics; copied in 1764 A.D.), *Vyākarana* of Jhumura Nandi and *Goyichandrikā*, a commentary on Goyichandra's grammar written by Kamalākānta Devasarmā, *Vidagdha Toshini*, *Jātaka Paddhati* (an astrological text, copied in the Saka year 1699 or 1777 A.D.) and *Alamkāra Kaustabha* (poetics; copied in the Saka year 1640 or 1718 A.D.).

Kākilyā: Apart from the famous manuscript of *Srikrishnakirtana*, the finds from this village in P.S. Vishnupur include a *Vyākarana* of Jhumura Nandi (copied in 1757 Sakāvda or 1835 A.D.) and *Sandhipada* (a grammar) of Goyichandra (copied in 1738 Sakāvda or 1816 A.D.).

Pāṭpur: This small village in P.S. Vishnupur yielded more than one hundred manuscripts, the oldest of which relates to astrology and was copied in Sakāvda 1390 corresponding to 1468 A.D. *Kichakbadha*, another manuscript by Niti Varmā was copied in 1011 Bangāvda or 1604 A.D. The antiquity of many other manuscripts found in this village ranges from 250 to 300 years.

Chākdaha: A village in the Vishnupur police station, still famous as a centre of astrological learning. Apart from a large number of manuscripts on *Jyotisha*, many copies of standard texts on *Vyākarana*, *Nyāya* and *Kāvya* have been recovered from here. Sākadwipi Brahmins constitute the bulk of upper-caste Hindus in the village.

Pāno: One Kavichandra of this village in P.S. Kotulpur flourished during the 17th century and became a court poet of the Malla king Gopāl Singh.[1] He translated parts of the Mahābhārata at the

[1] According to Asutosh Bhattacharyya (*Bāngla Mangal Kāvyer Itihās*, 3rd Edn. pp. 138-39), Sankar Kavichandra Chakraborty of the village of Pānuā was contemporary of the Malla king Bir Singh at whose instance he composed his *Dharmamangal* around 1680 A.D.

request of his royal patron. His narrative poem *Govindamangal* earned immense popularity during his time.[1]

Kudriyā: This place in P.S. Joypur has yielded about five hundred manuscripts, the earliest of which is ascribed to the beginning of the 16th century.

Desrā: This village in P.S. Kotulpur has yielded about two hundred manuscripts, half of which have been collected from the custody of a single family. The finds are on *Smriti*, *Nyāya*, *Vyākarana*, *Kāvya* and *Jyotisha*.

Māliārā: Most of the manuscripts collected from this village in P.S. Barjora were found in the *Pūthisālā* (library) of a local scholar popularly known by the name of Vidyānidhi. The collection includes texts like *Rasakadamba*, *Gitagovinda*, *Chaitanyacharitāmrita*, *Sutrajātaka* (astrology), *Sāhitya Darpana* of Dandi and numerous other works on grammar, poetics, law and astrology. Nearly all the manuscripts found in the village date from the first quarter of the 18th to the second quarter of the 19th century.

Bhutsahar: This village in P.S. Simlapal and its immediate vicinity have yielded over a hundred manuscripts on various subjects which include *Tātparya Dipikā* (a commentary on dramaturgy) written by one Vishnu Pundit in 1587 Sakāvda or 1665 A.D.; *Byāptisi Ṭikā*, a text on logic copied in the Saka year 1809 equivalent to 1887 A.D. and a commentary on the grammar of Goyichandra entitled *Dhātusutra* written by one Rājiblochana Vidyālaṁkāra and copied in the Saka year 1776 corresponding to 1854 A.D. A copy of *Satpadistotram* of Saṁkarāchārya found from the village is dated 1588 Sakāvda or 1666 A.D. Among the manuscripts of original works, a text of logic entitled *Jātibādhaka* by one Jagadishchandra Bhattacharyya Tarkālaṁkār and a text on astrology, *Jyotisha-Kārikā*, by one Mahāpandit Mahāmahopādhyāy Dasavala Singha are worthy of mention.

Jantā: About a hundred MSS. have been found from the residence of a Brahmin gentleman of this village (in P.S. Vishnupur) whose ancestors were presumably pundits.

Chhilimpur: About fifty manuscripts on *Vyākarana*, *Nyāya*, *Smriti* and *Purāna* have been recovered from this village.

Rāmsāgar: This prosperous village housing many educated families and lying 3 miles north-west of Vishnupur has earned the name of being a veritable store-house of manuscripts, many of which have already been acquired by the Vishnupur Sāhitya Parishad.

Bhetrā: A single family from this village in P.S. Onda has donated about fifty manuscripts on *Vyākarana*, *Nyāya*, *Kāvya* and *Darsana* to the Vishnupur Sāhitya Parishad.

Gāmidyā: In P.S. Onda, this village was once a well-known centre of Sanskrit learning. It is reported that some local families with

[1] Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay– *Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibritta*, Vol. III. Calcutta, 1966. pp. 482 & 1064-65.

scholarly traditions still have large stocks of old manuscripts with them.

Ajodhyā: A village in P.S. Vishnupur, it has yielded more than a hundred MSS. on various subjects. It is said that there were once several competing *ṭols* (Sanskrit schools) in the village of which only one now survives with difficulty.

The town of Sonamukhi has yielded several hundred copies and original texts on various subjects of which about six hundred are in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta. Here too there were several *ṭols* in the past of which only one is extant today.

Apart from the places mentioned above, the villages of Mathurā, Dwārikā, Avantikā, Belṭhyā, Nārāyanpur, Basantapur, Rāutārā, and Dihar (all in P.S. Vishnupur); Bahulārā, Mākrākol, Bhetrā, Birsinghapur and Swarupnagar (all in P.S. Onda) and Birbāndh (P.S. Ranibandh) also enjoyed renown as seats of learning and have yielded quantities of old manuscripts. The Bengali MSS. library of the Visva-Bhārati University has also acquired a large number of manuscripts from the villages of Indas and Patrasayer.

While discussing the river-system of the district in Chapter I and the growth of early mediaeval architecture in Chapter II, it was pointed out that the culture of the region, religious or otherwise, seemed to have developed along the courses of its principal rivers, particularly the Dwārakeswar. Although it cannot be proved from the evidence of the recovered manuscripts (very few of which go back beyond the 16th century) that these riparian tracts cherished mediaeval learning along with their being the abodes of religious architecture and culture, it may not be wrong to conclude that the developments were complementary to each other. Of the centres of learning, just enumerated, Gāmidyā, Bhetrā, Ajodhyā, Kākilyā, Jantā, Dihar, Bishryā, Chhilimpur, Chhābrā, Mākrākol, Dharāpāṭ, Pāikpārā, Chākdaha, Rāmsāgar, Pātrabākrā, Dwārikā, Abantikā, Mathurā, Belṭhyā and Vishnupur are all situated within three miles from the banks of the Dwārakeswar river. This is more than a mere geographical coincidence.

Important men of arts and letters

The most important among the mediaeval men of letters who flourished within the limits of the present-day Bankura district was Ananta Baḍu Chandidāsa who has already been mentioned. Rāmāi Pundit, the author of the theological text *Sunya Purāna* and Sankar Kavichandra Chakrabarti, who composed a *Maṅgal-kāvya* ballad in the 17th century, have also been referred to earlier. Among other men of letters, special mention should be made of Mānikrām Ganguly, who was an important poet and the author of a *Dharma-maṅgal kāvya*, a long narrative poem in praise of *Dharma*. There is a serious divergence of opinion among the historians of Bengali literature about Mānikrām's time. Mānikrām gave a date in the traditional circuitous literary convention at the end of his book which has been

interpreted by different scholars differently. According to Dinesh Chandra Sen it was 1389 Sakābda (1467 A.D.) but Jogeshchandra Ray placed it at 1703 Sakābda (1781 A.D.) while to Muhammad Sahidullah it was 1491 Sakābda (1569 A.D.). From textual evidence Basantakumar Chattopadhyay thought that the work was written between 1694 and 1778 A.D. while Asutosh Bhattacharyya reads the year as 1489 Sakābda or 1567 A.D. Another *Dharma-maṅgal* poet, Sitārām Dās, was born in the village of Indas. He was a Dakshin-Rāḍhiya Kāyastha by caste. The year of composition given at the end of his *Dharma-maṅgal* reads as 1004. If this refers to the Bengali era, which is unlikely, it will be equivalent to 1597 A.D. Some think that the year refers to the Malla era, which was current in Mallabhum at that time. If it be so, the equivalent Christian year would be 1698 A.D.[1] A third *Dharma-maṅgal* poet, Rāmchandra Bandyopādhyāy, of village Chāmaṭ in Mallabhum, wrote his piece in 1038 Mallābda (1732 A.D.) at the wish of the Malla king Gopāl Singh.[2]

Bengali couplets, composed in the *payār* system of rhyming, elucidating simple rules of arithmetic, were a favourite means of instruction in traditional *ṭols* and *pāṭhsālās*. All these couplets or *āryās* are attributed to one Subhaṅkar. In the north-eastern part of the district there is an elaborate canal system which dates from the time of the reign of the Malla king Gopāl Singh. It is popularly known as the Subhaṅkar Dāḍā and is said to have been planned by one Jagannāth Dās, a Kāyastha minister of Gopāl Singh, who was given the honorific title of Subhaṅkar for his proficiency in mathematics. Investigations reveal that Subhaṅkar was not a personal name but a title conferred upon those who showed unusual proficiency in mathematics. There were at least three Subhaṅkars in Chhatna and one in Vishnupur. The name of one Subhaṅkar of Chhatna was Bhabāni Mitra and the Subhaṅkar of Vishnupur was Jagannāth Dās, just mentioned. Manuscripts of books by all the four Subhaṅkars are preserved in the collection of the Vishnupur Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad. All of them had composed *āryās* or verses incorporating results of simple arithmetical calculations.

The most significant contribution of the district in the cultural life of West Bengal, was, however, in the field of music. A distinct school of *Dhrupad* singing grew up in Vishnupur town which became, in course of time, the only school in Bengal of North Indian classical music. This school—or the Vishnupur *gharānā* as it is popularly called— has been dealt with in Appendix B of this chapter.

Among other men of arts and letters nearer our own times, who belonged to the district by reason of birth or adoption, mention should be made of Ramananda Chatterji, a distinguished product of

[1] op.cit. pp. 623-25.
[2] op.cit. p. 636.

the Bengali renaissance of the 19th century, whose pioneering contributions in the field of Indian journalism has immortalized him. Another stalwart was Jogeshchandra Ray Vidyānidhi who belonged to the neighbouring district of Hooghly by birth but became a native of Bankura by choice. (Brief life-sketches of these two worthy citizens of Bankura may be seen in Appendix C of this chapter). Satyakinkar Sahana and Basanta Kumar Chattopadhyay, two other illustrious sons of the district, have also enriched the scholarship of Bengal by their researches in the field of Bengali language and literature. Jamini Roy who is regarded as a pioneer of modern Indian art and whose experiments with traditional motifs and compositions have enriched the visual horizons of contemporary art forms in this country, had his ancestral home at Beliatore in Barjora police station of the district. Since his early creative years, he has been a resident of Calcutta. Ramkinkar Baij, another front-ranker in the realm of modern Indian art, who is known more for his sculptures than his paintings, also hails from this district. He has, however, been a resident of Sāntiniketan from his early childhood.

Early days of modern education

For the introduction of modern education, the district owes most to the pioneering efforts of Christian missionaries. Rev. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society appears to have been the first Christian missionary to visit the district and he used to pay visits to Bankura, from his station in Burdwan, around 1840 A.D. He established seven schools in and around Bankura town and kept them running with funds obtained from the Society. But after he left, the Society ceased to advance financial assistance, as a result of which three of the schools set up by him had to close down and the remaining four were taken over voluntarily by civil servants stationed in Bankura. The principal school which Weitbrecht had established was self-sustaining and it kept on functioning till it was taken over by the Government and converted into the Zilla School, still in existence in Bankura town.[1] According to Gastrell there were ten Anglo-Vernacular schools in the district in 1861, all of which were being voluntarily run by local civil servants in their private capacity although the attendance in them was very poor.[2] Modern education in the district had to wait until the arrival of the missionaries of the Wesleyan Mission who later came to belong to the Methodist Church. In the year 1870, Rev. John Richards of the Wesleyan Mission opened a Middle English school in Kuchkuchiā on the outskirts of Bankura town. In 1889, a High school wing was added to the existing Middle school. In June 1903, college classes were commenced in the High

[1] A. N. Basu (Ed.)—William Adam's Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 & 1838). Calcutta, 1941. p. 70 and L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 46.

[2] J. E. Gastrell—Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah. Calcutta, 1863.

school building.[1] (The threefold activities of this missionary society, of which the most important was connected with the promotion of education, have been described in details in the chapter on Public Life and Social Service Organizations as also under the entry 'Sārengā' in the chapter on Places of Interest).

A picture of the progress of modern education in the district during the early British period may be had from the following table prepared by Hunter:[2]

SCHOOLS IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1856-1873

Type of school	Number of schools				Number of pupils			
	1856-57	1860-61	1870-71	1872-73	1856-57	1860-61	1870-71	1872-73
Government English schools	1	1	1	1	155	116	215	186
Government Vernacular schools	2	2	5	2	105	97	397	199
Aided English schools	5	4	9	9	603	244	629	417
Aided Vernacular schools	6	5	64	12	491	410	2,527	504
Aided Girls' schools	—	—	4	3	—	—	105	102
Unaided English schools	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	110
Government Aided Primary schools	—	—	—	107	—	—	—	3,316
Unaided Primary schools	—	—	—	57	—	—	—	1,591
Total of all types of unaided schools	—	—	—	427	—	—	—	—

The position depicted in the preceding table remained practically unchanged in the closing years of the 19th century. Reporting on the attendance in schools in 1895-96 and 1896-97, C. A. Martin, the then Director of Public Instruction, found that 45.3 per cent and 47.6 per cent respectively of the boys of school going age were attending schools in the district.[3] But in 1900-01, 43.0 per cent and in 1901-02, 41.2 per cent of the boys of school going age attended schools and in the latter year 37.7 per cent of them were in different stages of Primary education. In 1901-02, only 3.7 per cent of girls of school going age were in schools and all of them attended different categories of Primary schools.[4]

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—op.cit. p. 46.
[2] W. W. Hunter—A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV. London, 1876. pp. 293-99.
[3] C. A. Martin—Review of Education in Bengal, 1892-93 to 1896-97: First Quinquennial Report. Calcutta, 1897. p. 13.
[4] A. Pedler—Review of Education in Bengal, 1897-98 to 1901-02; Second Quinquennial Report. Calcutta, 1902. pp. vi-viii.

Literacy and level of education

The Census of 1961 provides us with latest data about illiteracy, literacy and educational attainments of the people of the district. The table below, based on it, shows proportions of illiterates, literates[1] (without any educational level) and persons with educational levels up to Primary or Junior Basic and Matriculation or School Final and above for the district taken as a whole. (Figures in brackets indicate corresponding data for West Bengal).

Categories of persons	Number of persons	Number of males	Number of females
Total population	1,000	1,000	1,000
Illiterates	769 (707)	638 (599)	903 (830)
Total of all literates	231 (293)	362 (401)	97 (170)
Literates (without educational level)	146 (170)	220 (224)	72 (108)
Literates with educational level up to Primary or Junior Basic	69 (95)	112 (130)	24 (54)
Literates with educational level up to Matriculation/School Final and above	16 (28)	30 (47)	1 (8)

It may be of interest to compare the state of education in the district in 1961 with that obtaining 60 years ago in 1901. According to the Census of 1901, only 93 out of every 1,000 persons were literate; this included 90 male literates out of every 1,000 males and 3 female literates out of every 1,000 females. Moreover, according to the definition of the Census of 1901, anyone who could write his name was considered to be a literate person.

In 1901, the population of school going age was 1,67,461, of whom 82,422 were males and 85,039 females. 3,049 males and 565 females among them were in the lowest Primary, 24,924 males and 2,697 females were in the Lower Primary and 3,163 males and 25 females were in the Upper Primary stages of education.[2]

Writing in 1908, O'Malley reported: "Of the total number of schools, 1,330 with 42,608 pupils are public institutions and 76 with 707 pupils are private institutions. . . . There is only one college in the district. . . . The number of secondary schools is 63 and the attendance at them is 5,090. Of these schools no less than thirteen are High schools, at which 2,133 boys receive instruction. . . . There are altogether 28 Middle English schools, including 25 aided and 2 unaided schools, besides one maintained by the District Board. Secondary Vernacular education is losing popularity. . . . The total number of boys' Primary schools in the district is 1,059 of which

[1] According to the Census of 1961, a literate is a person who can read and write a simple letter in his mother tongue,

[2] A. Pepler—op.cit. p. viii,

190 are Upper Primary and 869 are Lower Primary schools. . . . The advance of female education, at least of a primary character, has been very noticeable in recent years; for the number of Primary girls' schools rose from 90 in 1901-02 to 183 in 1906-07 and the attendance from 1,466 to 2,987, besides 1,654 girls reading in boys' schools."[1]

In 1921 (according to the Census of that year), 111 out of every 1,000 persons in the district were literate. This included 212 literates out of every 1,000 males and 10 literates out of every 1,000 females. In the same year, 94 students of the Wesleyan Mission College appeared for the Intermediate Examination in Arts and 23 for the Intermediate Examination in Science of whom 43 and 14 passed the respective examinations. 47 appeared for the Bachelor of Arts Examination of whom 28 came out successful. Teaching in science subjects up to the degree stage had not started in the district till then.

According to the Census of 1931, there were only 86 literates per 1,000 persons in the district, of whom 80 were males and 6 females.[2] In 1930, 30 students from the district passed the B.A. examination and 17 graduated in science. In the following year, 28 graduated in Arts and 18 in science.

During the 20-year period from 1931 to 1951, the proportion of literates to the total population of the district rose appreciably. According to the Census of 1951, 139 out of every 1,000 persons were literate, i.e. they could at least read and write a simple letter in their mother tongue. The sexwise proportions of literates were 212 per 1,000 males and 66 per 1,000 females. In 1950, 26 candidates passed the degree examination in arts from the district and another 22 graduated in science. In 1951, 28 and 20 graduated in arts and science subjects respectively.

In the following 10-year period from 1951 to 1961, the rate of rise in literacy has been remarkable, largely due to the efforts of the Union and State Governments to extend educational facilities, at least at the primary level, in pursuance of the directive principles of the constitution of the Republic of India. The rate of literacy in the district rose from 139 in 1951 to 231 in 1961. The decennial rate of growth in male literacy was 150 per thousand and that in female literacy 32 per thousand. Persons receiving higher education also increased in number during the same period. In 1960, 79 arts and 52 science students graduated from the district.

In 1956, the Bankura Sammilani Medical College in Bankura town, which was a medical school until then, received affiliation from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Calcutta for the M.B.B.S.

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[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—op.cit. pp. 149-50.

[2] The apparent drop in the literacy rate in 1931 is partly explained by the fact that the Census of that year was boycotted by certain sections of the populace at the instance of the Indian National Congress.

course. 41 students in 1960, 50 in 1961 and 33 in 1962 graduated in medicine from this institution.

Spread of female education

From the foregoing data about the relative proportions of literate males and literate females, it will be evident that the district had so long been extremely backward in the field of women's education. In the 20-year period from 1901 to 1921, the proportional increase of female literates to the total female population of the district was 7 per thousand only. During the following decade, there was a decrease of 5 literate women per thousand, the corresponding drop in the case of literate men, for the same period, being 132 per thousand. In the next 20-year period from 1931 to 1951, the proportion of literate females to the total female population of the district rose by 60 per thousand. During the next 10-year period from 1951 to 1961, the increase in the proportion of literate females to the total female population of the district reached the record height of 32 per thousand. But of the 97 per thousand of literate women, 72 were without any educational level. Another 24 among a thousand women had received education only up to the Primary or Junior Basic level and no more than one in a thousand females had received education above the Matriculation or equivalent standard. In 1951, 66,734 girls were reading in High and Junior High schools and another 18,261 were in the Primary schools of the district. In 1961, the number of girls in High and Junior High schools was 67,601 besides 42,136 girls in Primary schools.[1] Even then, the district average was far below the State average. The proportion, in 1961, of women in the district with education up to Primary or Junior Basic levels was only 44.4 per cent of the West Bengal average while the proportion of women with education above the Matriculation level was no more than 12.5 per cent of the State average.

This insufficiency of female education in the district in the past and a significant improvement in the position in recent times is corroborated by the evidence of distribution of institutions for women's education, discussed hereafter.

Spread of education among backward classes and tribes

According to the Census of 1901, the literacy rate among the animists (i.e. those who declared their faith in any of the tribal religions) was only 4.5 per thousand, the sexwise ratios being 9 in every 1,000 males and only 0.06 per thousand females. Reporting in 1918 for the years 1912-17, Hornell wrote: "During the period under review a scheme for the improvement and extension of education among the Santhals in the district of Bankura, Birbhum and Midnapore was sanctioned by the Government and a recurring grant of Rs. 10,257 was made for the purpose. A Board of Santhal Educa-

[1] The figures for High schools include all students attending such schools, irrespective of whether they were in the primary or in the secondary departments. Figures for Primary schools do not take into account all the scholars in the primary stage of education, but only account for those attending schools specifically meant for primary education.

tion was formed in the district of Bankura. It is composed of the District Magistrate, a missionary and the Deputy Inspector of Schools. The functions of this Board are both advisory and executive."[1] Setting up of this Board facilitated the educational activities of the Wesleyan Mission among the Santals, especially of the Bankura and Raipur thana areas. During the Census of 1921, the rate of rise in literacy among persons returning themselves as animists was 3 per thousand. It was very poor in comparison with the corresponding rise of 10.3 per thousand among the general populace of the district for the corresponding 20-year period. In 1921, there were 7.5 literate persons per 1,000 animists in the district. This included 14.6 literates per 1,000 males and 0.1 literate per 1,000 females. Speaking about the general educational backwardness of the Santals, the Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in West Bengal for the period 1942-43 to 1946-47 stated: "Of the aboriginal races, the Santals are the most important and their education has had a chequered history. With the passing of the Local Self-Government Act of 1885, primary education was made over to the newly formed District Boards. But the Santals were made an exception; for their education a special body known as the Santal Education Board was formed in those districts where there was a large incidence of Santal population. The Santal Education Boards at Bankura and Malda had very little to do beyond granting stipends, because in these districts the District School Boards were established during this quinquennium."

During the next decade there was a decline in the proportion of literates to the total animist population. The Census of 1931 recorded only 5.6 literates per 1,000 persons professing the tribal faiths—a drop of 1.9 literates per thousand compared to the previous Census count. This included 11.1 literates per thousand males and 1.2 literates per thousand females.

A word of caution should, however, be sounded when dealing with the figures provided by the censuses up to 1941 which defined animists, tribals and 'others' as those professing religions other than Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism etc. and did not specifically refer to their tribal-cum-ethnic groupings. While those Santals who had returned the original Santali tribal religion as their faith had been taken account of in these censuses, those who declared Hinduism or Christianity as their religion were excluded from the animist tribal categories. It has already been stated in Chapter III that, of late, more and more tribals are returning Hinduism and not their original tribal religions as the faith professed by them. It should also be mentioned in this connexion that the literate and educated tribals of today exhibit a

[1] W. W. Hornell—Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17; Fifth Quinquennial Review. Calcutta, 1918. p. 141.

preference for Hinduism while their illiterate brethren living in isolation still regard themselves as non-Hindus or non-Christians, thus rendering the relevant figures further unrepresentative of the actual ethnic groupings. In this respect the statistics provided by the Census of 1961 would appear to reflect more correctly the real state of literacy and education among the tribals, referred to (as ethnic groups) in the President's Schedule of Backward Tribes. But the 1961 figures, being based on different concepts, are not comparable with analogous data collected during preceding censuses due to a shift of the definitive factors from religion to ethnic affinities.

According to the Census of 1961, 74.9 out of every thousand persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in Bankura district are literate, i.e. they can at least write and read a simple letter in their respective mother tongues or in the written language in use amongst them. The sexwise break-up shows that 139.6 per thousand males and 10.9 per thousand females are literates.

In 1961, there were more than 100 persons in the district belonging to the Scheduled Tribes who had passed the Matriculation or an equivalent examination. Besides, there were 40 others who had passed the Intermediate examination either in arts or in science. There were 11 graduates in all and one had post-graduate qualifications.[1]

Education in pre-British times was generally sectarian in character. The *tols*, *pāṭhsālās* and *chatuspāṭhis* run by the Brahmin pundits were seldom, if ever, meant for the Hindu *jal-achal* castes, not to speak of the low-born tribals. On the other hand, the *maktabs* and *mādrāsās* (there were not many of them in Bankura) run by the *maulavis* looked after the religious education of Muslim boys only. After the ban on Christian missionary activities was lifted by the East India Company in the fourth decade of the 19th century, Christian missionaries began to take interest in social welfare work among the backward tribes. Although their primary objective was to convert them into Christianity, the propitiatory means adopted to that end, namely social welfare and spread of literacy did produce some real benefits. Modern education was, for the first time, made available to these backward people through the efforts of the Christian missionaries, the first of whom to arrive at Bankura belonged to the Church Mission Society, but he did not contribute much towards the education of the tribals. In the beginning of the present century some American missionaries started work amongst the Santals of Mejia area. Their activities included a drive for literacy and the running of an orphanage.[2] But systematic educational work by Christian missionaries started around 1900 A.D. when the Wesleyan Mission (now known as the Methodist Church) opened a centre in

[1] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.
[2] L. S. S. O'Malley—op.cit. p. 46.

the village of Sārengā in P.S. Raipur and commenced its evangelical, social and educational activities among the Santals and other backward tribes and castes in the region. The Mission had already been functioning in Bankura town since 1877 but from that time it began to pay much more attention to the upliftment of the backward tribals. Writing in 1933, Mitra and Zachariah remarked: "The chief agencies responsible for educational work amongst the Santals are the American Baptist Mission of Midnapore and the Wesleyan Mission of Bankura."[1] In 1939, A. K. Chanda wrote : "Excellent work continued to be done for the education of the Santals by the Methodist Mission at the industrial school for the girls at Bankura."[2] In 1963-64, three *Āsrama* schools, namely Bānibitān Vidyā Mandir, Sābrākon Senior Basic School and Ukrādihi Senior Basic School were established for the Scheduled Tribes. Another *Āsrama* school, the Ranibandh Junior Basic School, was also started for de-notified communities (ex-criminal tribes) during the same year.[3]

Factors in spread of education: a case study

A survey carried out by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bhārati University, Sāntiniketan, in the village of Kāshipur in P.S. Sonamukhi throws interesting light on the progress of education there. It was surveyed twice, once in 1956 and again in 1960.

"Kashipur during the first investigation had one subsidised primary school (up to the 4th class) housed in a kuchcha *(sic)* building. During the intervening period a pucca *(sic)* building for a primary basic school has been raised. Number of teachers has remained the same in both the periods. . . . The roll strength of the school which was 43 at the time of the first survey had not gone beyond 63 during these years." In 1956, there were 29 boys and 14 girls of whom 27 boys and 14 girls belonged to Caste Hindu and *Nabasākha sreni* and only 2 boys belonged to the Scheduled Castes. In 1960, there were 31 boys and 19 girls of whom 29 boys and 19 girls belonged to the upper Hindu castes, and only 2 boys were from the Scheduled Castes.

"The school-registration of girls increased only slightly. A notable feature in the composition of the students is the near absence of boys and girls from depressed caste families. A junior school (up to 8th class) was opened during this period in a neighbouring village (where the ex-zamindar resided) mainly through the initiative of the local youth. . . .

"There was a literacy centre run at the instance of the C.D.P. during the first point of survey. Though primarily meant for the adults, the night centre mainly catered to the young boys from the depressed castes who by day would earn their living. During re-

[1] M. Mitra and K. Zachariah—Eighth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal: 1927-32. Calcutta, 1933. p. 97.

[2] A. K. Chanda—Ninth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal: 1932-37. Calcutta, 1939. p. 195.

[3] Annual Administration Report of Tribal Welfare Department, West Bengal: 1963-64. Alipore (Calcutta), 1966. pp. 20-21.

survey the centre was found closed. The young villagers who were doing the teaching at the initial stage on an honorary basis all belonged to the 'Bhadralog' class (to use their terminology) and they were not themselves concerned about the need for the spread of literacy among the 'Chotologs'. . . . The likely-beneficiaries on the other hand pointed that after the day's toil and moil they could ill afford to spend the evening with a few alphabets. . . .

"There was a library in the village set up under the initiative of the C.D.P. . . . The library contained books of a fairly good quality and the issue of books in 1956 was found to be quite encouraging. The accession of new books increased fairly up to the year 1959 but was subsequently arrested. At the time of the re-survey, the library was not functioning properly; most of its books were issued and were lying idle in the houses of members with little possibility of being returned.

"The Community Radio Centre that was started in 1956 had become very popular during this period. . . . Degree of awareness about the outside happenings was found to have considerably improved among a section of the villagers. . . .

"An analysis of these developments pointed towards one very significant feature which might be briefly stated below.

"It is a common knowledge that the depressed caste population in a village (who are occupationally associated with agricultural labour, share-cropping, non-agricultural day labour etc.) are educationally most backward. Another aspect of the educational backwardness in the villages is underlined by the fact of vast illiteracy among the women. These are the two most depressed areas covering a large portion of the population where the hit must be hardest if any headway in even broad literacy position has to be made. And it is precisely in these two areas that the agencies had met with their failure at Kashipur. The improvement in the already existing primary school on the starting of the junior school in the neighbourhood meant that a particular section of the children (mostly male children of the so-called upper castes) who were already being sent to school would now perhaps receive slightly better training at a less cost. Technically, of course, the doors of the school were open to all irrespective of sex or caste or occupation. But that by itself could never break the ice. This will be perhaps corroborated by the survey. . . .

"Adult literacy over a period of four or five years can show changes in the following processes, viz. (*i*) if the new entrants into adulthood are considerably different (in respect of literacy) from their preceding age-groups, (*ii*) if a positive programme of coping with backlog of illiteracy is taken up during this period or (*iii*) if the period under reference represents a lull period preceded by a period of adult literacy programmes. In the last case the neo-literates of the preceding period might be found to have lapsed into illiteracy.

"Literacy percentages of adult males and females (including the school-going adults) during this period in Kashipur fell from 34% to 30%. The fall was recorded both among the males and females. An absolute drop in the number of school-going adults from 12 to 4 could be associated with the winding up of the literacy centre. What is striking, however, is a sharp fall of literacy from 42.3% to 31.3% in the age-group 15-24, the group where we have new entrants into adulthood. In fact, it is this particular group which ought to have shown an improvement in literacy position. What seems probable, however, is that the withdrawal of the literacy programme had affected mainly the young section (between 10 and 20) of the village for it was this section which was mainly drawn by the programme. Most of those recorded as literates during the period of activity of the adult centre had in the meantime reverted to the old position. . . .

"A fall of literacy percentage from 84.8 to 75.5 among the males in the owner-cultivator group may seem a little dubious. . . . In general, the owner-cultivator group evinced a growing interest in need for education which, however, was more reflected in their attitude towards education of children.

"What was striking, however, was that a 25.0% of literacy among agricultural labourers (including the school-going adults) which was mainly achieved through the efforts of the education extension agency of the Community Development Project had come down to 6%. The winding up of the literacy centre, to which reference has already been made, affected this group as well as the group termed 'miscellaneous' that mainly consisted of non-agricultural day labourers. . . . There was not the slightest change in the 100% illiteracy among the womenfolk of the former groups.

"A castewise study of literacy during the period revealed the same picture. . . . There was no school-going adult among the depressed caste population at the second point of enquiry. Illiteracy among women of this group was the same 100%. Among the males it rose from 79% to 92%. Among the caste Hindu population percentage of school-going adults had shown a slight improvement though the level of illiteracy registered a rise from 42% to 48%. . . ."

The data collected during the survey shows that "the percentage of school-registration among male children of school-going age (5-14) had dropped from 62.1% to 48.1% while among females the percentage slightly increased. Among the males the drop was more pronounced in the age-group 10-14.

"An occupation-groupwise study shows that this fall in school-registration among male children could be mainly ascribed to share-cropping and agricultural labour households withdrawing their children from schools.

"In fact, at a time when the general percentage of school-registration had dropped, the owner-cultivator groups had sent more of

their children to school. In the age-group 10-14 it was 100% in 1960 as against 88.9% of the previous period. The main reason for such a huge drop in school-registration among the children of share-cropping and agricultural labour families was the winding up of the night school of which mention has already been made. Children of these families were mostly availing themselves of the night school rather than the regular school.

"A castewise study revealed the picture further clearly. While the children of the non-Scheduled Castes, both males and females, were being increasingly sent to schools, the children of the Scheduled Caste families had almost stopped going to school."[1]

The picture of apparent retrogression which the Kāshipur survey paints, need not cause undue pessimism about the general condition of education in the district. It is amply evident from the survey that there is a general demand for education among people of all castes and classes. If they are provided with proper institutional facilities, they readily make good use of them. If, however, such facilities are lacking or are beyond their reach, then most of them cease to exert any effective demand for education. Such lukewarmness is not surprising at the initial stage of the spread of universal literacy.

Primary schools

The first Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in Bengal for the years 1892-97 gives a list of 138 Higher and 936 Lower Primary schools in the district which were aided from different governmental funds. The aid, however, amounted to only Rs. 36 for each Higher and Rs. 11 for each Lower Primary school.[2]

Writing in 1908, O'Malley stated: "The total number of boys' Primary schools in the district is 1,059, of which 190 are Upper Primary and 869 are Lower Primary schools. With the exception of two Upper Primary schools attached to the two Guru Training schools, all the schools are under private management, 956 being aided and 101 un-aided. There are also 88 night schools attended by 1,591 pupils, mostly sons of artisans and day labourers. It is reported that most of the Upper Primary schools have separate buildings, but that they are not very suitable for the purpose, and that there are scarcely any Lower Primary schools with separate buildings. For want of such accommodation, the classes are generally held in the common *pūjā* houses of the village or in the verandah of some well-to-do villager's house."[3]

In 1946-47, there were 794 Primary schools in the district. Under the provisions of the Local Self-Government Act of 1885, the District Boards and the municipalities were responsible for the growth and

[1] G. C. Mandal and S. C. Sengupta—Kāshipur : West Bengal, 1956-60. Sāntiniketan, 1962. pp. 5-7 & 21-30.
[2] C. A. Martin—op.cit. p. 81.
[3] L. S. S. O'Malley—op.cit. pp. 149-50.

maintenance of primary education but of the 794 primary schools in the district only 91 were under the management of the District School Board, 7 were run by municipalities and 2 were controlled by the State Government. 731 of these schools received grants-in-aid from the Government, while 63 were unaided.[1] "There was no change in the system of awarding scholarships. As primary education is intended to be free, according to the provisions of the Local Self-Government Act of 1885 and its subsequent amendments, no scholarships are awarded to pupils in the Primary schools. Several scholarships—Grade I scholarships of the value of Rs. 3 and Grade II scholarships of the value of Rs. 2 are awarded on the results of Primary Final Examinations and these are tenable in Secondary schools. A few scholarships were awarded by the Santal Education Board, Bankura."[2]

After independence, Government took steps to unify primary education and the Primary schools came to be managed by the District or Municipal Boards according to their locations. As a result, out of the total of 1,047 Primary schools in the district in 1951-52, 990 were placed under the District Board, 7 schools continued to be run by the municipalities, besides the 33 Government-aided and 17 unaided, privately managed Primary schools. 23 of these 1,047 schools were exclusively meant for girls. This sizable increase in the number of Primary schools in the district in about 4½ years' time was largely due to the efforts of the State Government which, acting on the recommendations of the School Education Committee of 1949, started compulsory primary education in certain selected areas of the district. The table below indicates the progress of primary education in the district during the First and the Second Five Year Plan periods.

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT DURING FIRST & SECOND FIVE YEAR PLANS

Year	No. of schools		Enrolment		No. of teachers		Expenditure (in Rs.)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Male	Female	Boys	Girls
1951-52	1,023	23	64,317	18,234	2,616	22	10,55,302	25,403
1954-55	1,740	25	86,898	33,447	4,081	59	22,13,676	39,932
1958-59	1,986	25	84,432	37,126	4,434	56	34,47,538	52,502

Basic education

Basic education was first conceived by Mahatma Gandhi whose original scheme has been adopted, with certain modifications, by all

[1] Directorate of Education, Government of West Bengal—Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in West Bengal: for the period 1942-43 to 1946-47. Calcutta, 1951. p. 15.

[2] ibid. p. 23.

the State Governments in India. In West Bengal this new programme was first mooted in 1949 when it was decided that Basic education would be imparted in two stages. Firstly, the Junior Basic schools were to provide for free education to all children between 6 and 11 years of age. This stage was to include five academic sessions from Class I to Class V. Secondly, the Senior Basic schools were to provide education to children between 11 and 14 in three academic sessions from Class VI to Class VIII. Basic educational institutions started opening from 1951 without disturbing the existing Primary, Middle English or Junior High schools. From 1958-59, however, in addition to the newly established Junior Basic schools, some of the old Primary schools began to be converted into Junior Basic schools.

In 1951-52, there were 3 Junior Basic schools in the district with a total of 317 students and involving an annual expenditure of Rs. 6,055 of which Government's share was Rs. 3,651. At the end of the First Five Year Plan, i.e. in 1956, the number of Basic schools stood at 22 with a total enrolment of 1,982 students and involving an annual expenditure of Rs. 56,881 of which Rs. 49,987 was provided by the Government.

During the Second Five Year Plan, 5 Senior Basic schools and a Pre-Basic (Nursery) school (at Jāyrāmbāṭi) were opened. In 1958-59, there were in all 63 Junior Basic schools in the district with a total enrolment of 5,176 students and an annual expenditure of Rs. 1,99,069 of which the Government's share was Rs. 1,91,939. Side by side with the experiment in Basic training, the old Primary schools continued to exist despite the conversion of some of them into Junior Basic schools.

In 1964, there were altogether 2,228 Government-aided Primary schools in the district, more than three-fourths of which were under the management of the District Board, 6 were run by the different municipalities and 5 were under the direct supervision of the State Government. There were, besides, some 50 unaided and privately managed Primary schools. The total governmental expenditure on primary education for 1964 stood at Rs. 49,40,474. In the same year the number of Junior Basic schools in the district stood at 102, all of which were aided by the State Government involving an expenditure of Rs. 6,37,697 for the year. Only one Pre-Basic school continued to exist in the district at Jāyrāmbāṭi in P.S. Kotulpur. During 1963-64, there were altogether 8 Primary and Junior Basic schools exclusively meant for girls which received a total grant-in-aid of Rs. 7,742. Five of these schools were in P.S. Bankura and one each in the Vishnupur, Sonamukhi and Onda police stations.

Secondary schools

The first Secondary school in the district was opened by Rev. Weitbrecht in Bankura town in 1840. After the Church Missionary Society, to which Rev. Weitbrecht belonged, ceased functioning in the

district, the school was firstly taken over by the local civil servants and then by the Government of Bengal which converted it into the Bankura Zilla School. The credit of establishing the first High school in the district goes to the Wesleyan Mission. In 1870, Rev. John Richards of this Mission set up a school at Kuchkuchiā in the outskirts of Bankura town. In 1889, a High school department was added to the institution which was till then a Middle school. These two departments worked side by side until 1899 when the Middle school was abolished and the school was converted into a High school recognized by the University of Calcutta and aided by the Government of Bengal.

Writing in 1908, L. S. S. O'Malley reported: "The number of secondary schools (in the district) is 63; . . . of these schools no less than 13 are High schools. . . . The largest is the Kuchkuchiā High school with 336 boys on the rolls; this school is maintained by the Wesleyan Mission and is aided by the Government. One school is maintained by Government, viz., the Zilla School at Bankura and 9 received grants-in-aid, viz., the High schools at Kuchkuchiā, Vishnupur, Kotālpur, Kuchiākol, Sonāmukhi, Rol, Palāshdāngā, Māliārā and Beliātore. Besides these, there were three unaided schools, viz., the Bankura Hindu High School and the High schools at Rājagrām and Indās. There are altogether 28 Middle English schools, including 25 aided and 2 unaided schools, besides 1 maintained by the District Board. Secondary Vernacular education is not popular and the number of Middle Vernacular school has decreased to 22, of which 6 are maintained by the District Board and 16 are unaided."[1]

In 1913 there were 11 High schools in the district recognized by the University of Calcutta. These were the Bankura Hindu School, the Bankura Zilla School, the Kuchkuchiā Wesleyan Central Institution, all in and around Bankura town; the Vishnupur High School, the Indās High School, the Kotulpur High School, the Kuchiākol Rādhāballav Institution, the Palāshdāngā High School, the Rājagrām High School, not far from Bankura town; the Chowdhuri Mohammad Taib Institution at Rol and the Sonāmukhi Jubilee High School. In 1919, recognition of the Calcutta University was extended to three more High schools, namely Okershā High English School, the Māliārā High English School and the Sonāmukhi High English School. Some twelve years later, in 1931, we find that only 6 schools were added to this list of 14 High schools recognized by the Calcutta University for the purpose of the Matriculation examination. These institutions were the Rāmsāgar High English School, the Bāmniā High School, the Hārmāsrā High English School, the Khātrā C. S. H. E. School, the Pātrasāyer Gurudās High English

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—op.cit. p. 149.

School and the Tiluri Kripāmayee High School. In 1946, i.e. just before independence, there were altogether 33 High schools in the district of which one was run by the Government, 14 received grants-in-aid from the State and 18 were unaided.[1]

After independence, the increase in the number of Secondary schools in the district has been quite impressive. Just before the commencement of the First Five Year Plan, there were 48 High English schools in the district, of which one was managed by the Government, 37 privately managed schools received grants-in-aid from the State and 10 other privately run High schools were unaided. About the same time, i.e. during 1951-52, there were altogether 85 Middle schools in the district coaching pupils up to Class VI of which 4 were under the District Board, 75 were privately managed and received grants-in-aid from the Government while 6 were unaided.[2] The overall annual expenditure for these schools amounted to Rs. 1,59,402, of which Government paid Rs. 13,201. In the pre-independence period, management of Middle schools was much neglected. Little attention used to be paid to them either by the local bodies or by the Education Department of the State Government.

After independence, following the recommendations of the Mudaliar Commission on Secondary Education, these institutions began to receive proper attention from the Government. Primary schools were detached from Middle schools and their management was handed over to the District School Board set up in this district in 1951. With the separation of the Primary schools, their nomenclature was changed from Middle English schools to Junior High schools. From 1951 onwards, lump grants are being given by the Government to these institutions through the Board of Secondary Education, West Bengal at rates varying from Rs. 720 to Rs. 960 per year by way of maintenance and establishment charges. The Junior High schools in the areas covered by the National Extension Blocks receive further assistance from Government for the improvement of their buildings, the expenditure being shared between the Government and the local public on a 50 : 50 basis.

In the present system of secondary education, the four-class Junior High schools occupy an important place and lead on to the High or Higher Secondary schools at the top. Prior to 1947, secondary education used to be imparted through two types of institutions, namely High English schools, consisting of Classes III to X and Middle English schools with Classes III to VI. Following the introduction of free primary education in the rural areas of the district

[1] Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in West Bengal: 1942-43 to 1946-47. Calcutta, 1951. p. 35.

[2] Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in West Bengal: 1947-48 to 1951-52. Calcutta, 1959. pp. 54-55.

since 1946, Primary schools, comprising Classes I to IV, were separated from the High and the Middle English schools. Middle schools had thus only two Classes, V and VI, and High schools six, from V to X. This system continued until 1947 when a separate category of four-class Junior High schools, comprising Classes V to VIII, was introduced and local sponsors of two-class Middle schools were encouraged to open two more Classes, VII, and VIII. The new four-class Junior High schools cater to the educational needs of pupils between 11 and 14 years of age. Within a year of introduction of the four-class Junior High schools in place of the two-class Junior High schools, 30 of the existing two-class Middle schools were upgraded to four-class Junior High schools. In 1955-56, there were as many as 40 such institutions in the district. This pace of improvement was maintained throughout the first three years of the Second Five Year Plan and in 1958-59 the number of such schools rose to 46. In 1964, there were in all 117 Junior High schools in the district including a few of the remaining two-class type. All these institutions received grants-in-aid from the Government amounting to Rs. 8,21,876 in 1964.

Senior Basic schools

Senior Basic schools play an important role in the general scheme of Basic education. They are designed to provide practical-cum-theoretical education to children of the 11-14 age-group. A school of this type consists of 3 Classes, VI, VII and VIII, and performs more or less the same functions in the general set-up of secondary education as the Junior High schools. According to the plan adopted in West Bengal for imparting Basic training, Senior Basic schools are established only on the recommendation of the technical section of the Directorate of Education which bases its decision on local requirements. The first Senior Basic school was set up in the district in 1956-57 and the expenditure incurred on it during that year was Rs. 1,453, of which Government shared Rs. 377 as grant-in-aid. In 1958-59, there were 5 such schools in the district accounting for a total expenditure of Rs. 30,900, of which the Government's share was Rs. 21,959. In 1963-64, there were altogether 24 Senior Basic schools in the district receiving grants-in-aid from the Government which totalled Rs. 2,43,300.

High schools

Prior to independence, all High schools were under the academic control of the University of Calcutta. Since 1950, secondary education in the State has come under the control of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. The inspection of High schools vests with the departmental officers under the Director of Public Instruction, West Bengal but the Board consults the Education Directorate in all matters of policy.

Since independence, considerable improvement in the field of secondary education has been registered in the district consistent with the recommendations of the Mudaliar Commission. Many Secondary schools have improved their buildings with financial

aid from various developmental funds. Before 1947, there was practically no prescribed scale of pay for teachers working in non-Government Secondary schools. A prescribed scale of pay, in accordance with academic qualifications and length of service of the teacher concerned has now been introduced in all Government-aided High schools. Facilities for training of teachers have also increased and some of the more well-equipped High schools in the district have since been upgraded to Higher Secondary schools. The progress made in this sphere of education since independence is best illustrated with concrete statistics. In 1946-47, there were only 32 High schools for boys and one for girls in the whole of the district. In 1955-56 the number had increased to 68 High schools for boys and 3 for girls. This number declined to 50 High schools for boys and one for girls in 1959-60 due to the conversion of quite a few High schools to Higher Secondary schools of which 24 were opened in the district over the same period. In 1947-48, the total governmental expenditure incurred for 48 High schools in the district was Rs. 12,79,682 whereas in 1959-60, it was Rs. 11,48,505 for 51 High schools. In 1962, there were 51 High schools in the district receiving Government aid. There was then no Government High school in the district as the Bankura Zilla School had been converted into a Higher Secondary school in 1957. The total governmental expenditure on all these schools in 1962 was Rs. 10,78,915. In 1964, there were 57 Government-aided High schools in the district accounting for a total governmental expenditure of Rs. 8,38,881. The fall in expenditure was mainly due to the curtailment in capital investments after the declaration of emergency in 1962.

According to a report of the District Inspectress of Schools, Bankura, 4 High schools, in 1963-64, were meant exclusively for girls, two of them being located in Bankura town and one each at Vishnupur and Sonamukhi. In the same year the Girls' High schools together received grants-in-aid amounting to Rs. 34,737. Besides these, there were 15 Junior High schools in the district exclusively meant for girls' education.

In 1956-57, the Government of West Bengal decided to introduce Higher Secondary schools in the State. Of the 73 High schools existing in the district at that time 16, with requisite equipments and teaching staff, were immediately upgraded to Higher Secondary schools. Fifteen of these institutions were aided by Government while one was directly managed by it. During the first year of the introduction of this new system, the governmental expenditure on Higher Secondary schools in the district amounted to Rs. 5,15,410. In 1964, the number of Higher Secondary schools rose to 56, one of which was directly managed by Government and the rest were Government-aided while governmental expenditure on them was Rs. 31,49,352.

The table below gives comparative figures relating to educational institutions of various categories up to the Higher Secondary stage for some selected years, thus bringing out the overall pattern of educational progress in the district.

SELECTED YEARWISE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN BANKURA DISTRICT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT AID OR UNDER GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT*

Category of institution	No of institutions			
	1950	1955	1960	1964
1. Secondary schools				
(*a*) Higher Secondary Multi-purpose:				
(*i*) Government	—	—	1	1
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	—	--	27	55
(*b*) High schools:				
(*i*) Government	1	1	—	—
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	49	67	53	57
(*c*) Junior High schools.				
(*i*) Government	—	—	—	—
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	84	84	106	117
(*d*) Senior Basic schools:				
(*i*) Government	—	—	—	—
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	—	—	16	24
2. Primary institutions				
(*a*) Primary schools:				
(*i*) Government	2	6	9	6
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	1,024	1,759	2,032	2,222
(*b*) Junior Basic schools :				
(*i*) Government	—	—	—	—
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	2	12	67	102
3. *Tols* :				
(*i*) Government.	—	--	—	—
(*ii*) Govt.-aided	49	49	46	49

*This statement furnished by the District Inspector of Schools, Bankura on 15.3.65 does not include privately managed unaided schools.

Colleges for general education

The first college in the district was opened in Bankura town by the Wesleyan Mission at the request of the local public on the 29th July 1903 and was named the Wesleyan Mission College. The founder-Principal was Rev. John Mitchell. The institution got affiliation from the University of Calcutta in 1907 for teaching up to the Intermediate and B. A. standards. The Syndicate of the same University permitted the students of the college to sit for the F. A. Examination in 1905 as private candidates, since consideration of the application for affiliation of the institution to the F. A. standard, made in 1903, had been postponed in view of the impending Indian Universities Act of 1904. The college building, constructed at a cost of Rs. 35,000, was opened in 1910. In 1907, the college obtained affiliation from the University of Calcutta in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics in the Intermediate Arts classes and in 1913 for preparing students for the Intermediate Examination in Science. The college was already teaching its pupils in Mathematics (Pass & Honours), Physics (Pass) and Chemistry (Pass) in its B. A. course when, in 1921, affiliation was extended to it to conduct B. Sc. (Pass & Honours) courses.

The Wesleyan Mission College has had several changes in its name. The original appellation has been successively altered to Bankura College, Wesleyan College and, finally, to Bankura Christian College which is its present name. The college building is commodious and stands on spacious grounds containing a tank which is the biggest in the town. The laboratories are well-equipped and the library is well-stocked with books. Among extra-curricular activities of the students, mention may be made of National Cadet Corps training which was introduced in 1950. Voluntary training in first aid is also encouraged. A number of college scholarships and stipends is available to the students besides those awarded by the Government and the University.[1] To perpetuate the memory of two of its illustrious principals, Rev. John Mitchell and Rev. A. E. Brown, whose untiring and devoted services made the college what it is today, two students' hostels have been named after them as the Brown Hostel and the Mitchell Hostel. The Governing Body of the college consists of three members of the staff elected from amongst themselves, three representatives of the local public nominated by the Methodist Church Society, a few representatives of the Methodist Church Society, a few guardians and a representative of the State Government. The college is run by the Methodist Church Society of India, which was previously known as the Wesleyan Mission.

For long thirty-eight years since the establishment of the Bankura Christian College, there was no other college in the district till the Ramananda College was opened in Vishnupur in 1945 to comme-

[1] University of Calcutta—Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta: Supplement Volume. Calcutta, 1957. p. 61.

morate the memory of Ramananda Chatterjee, the well-known journalist and litterateur. It owes its foundation to local munificence obtained from R. N. Chakraborty, a merchant of the town, the Kolay family of Vishnupur and A. K. Bhattacharyya of the Vishnupur Bhattacharyya family. The Government of West Bengal sanctioned Rs. 80,000 for the construction of the building which was completed after independence. The college is affiliated up to the degree course (Pass & Honours) of the Burdwan University. The students take part in all usual extra-curricular activities. There are several college stipends and scholarships for meritorious or deserving students.[1]

The Bankura Sammilani College in Bankura town was opened in 1948 at the initiative of the Bankura Sammilani, a voluntary association mainly of the people of Bankura. In the first year of its existence, it received the affiliation of the Calcutta University for its I.Sc. course. This was done with a view to upgrading the medical school, the Sammilani was running in Bankura town, to the status of a medical college. The Intermediate in Arts course was subsequently introduced with the approval of the University of Calcutta. As the college had been running very successfully, the sponsors decided to introduce teaching facilities in B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com. courses and the University of Burdwan (which had meanwhile replaced the Calcutta University in this part of the country) extended its affiliation to the college for conducting these courses. The college has its own building and hostels, well-equipped laboratories and a library.

After the coming into existence of the University of Burdwan in 1960, the affiliations of all Bankura colleges (except the Bankura Sammilani Medical College) to the University of Calcutta ceased and they came under the newly formed Burdwan University. In July 1965, this new University extended its affiliation, for the three-year degree course in arts subjects only, to another college in the district at Pānchmurā in Taldangra police station. Abdus Sattar Khan of village Deulbhirā in the same P.S. took the initiative in establishing this institution by donating 20 acres of land and raising a public subscription amounting to nearly 3 lakhs of rupees.

Medical education

The Bankura Sammilani Medical School and Hospital, the forerunner of the present Bankura Sammilani Medical College and Hospital, was founded in 1924 in Bankura town at the initiative of a private, non-political, philanthropic organization called Bankura Sammilani. It received the recognition of Government as a bonafide medical school fit to conduct the L.M.F. course from 1924 to 1947. In 1947, under a State Act, the L.M.F. course in the school (as also in similar other schools in West Bengal) was discontinued for "unification of the standard of medical education." The school was, however, allowed to run classes for the last batch of students, admitted

[1] ibid. p. 88.

in 1947, to go through the full L.M.F. course until 1951. After these students took their L.M.F. diploma examination, the school ceased to function from 1952.

To utilize the equipments, buildings and the attached hospital consisting of 150 beds, the school was upgraded to a college and got its recognition from the Medical Faculty of the University of Calcutta to conduct the First M.B.B.S. course in 1956 and the Final M.B.B.S. course in 1958. The upgraded institution continued to run under the management of the Bankura Sammilani until June 4, 1961 when it was taken over by the Government of West Bengal and has since been running as one of the State medical colleges. One of the main reasons for upgrading this institution was to relieve the heavy pressure on the colleges and hospitals in Calcutta and to effect decentralization of medical education and thereby afford medical relief to rural areas.

The college admits 50 students per year for the M.B.B.S. course which runs for five years. Some more students are also taken in for the six-month P.R.C.A. (pre-registration clinical attendants') training course. A number of students graduating from the college is appointed yearly as House Surgeons or in other stipendiary posts. In August 1964, the new District Hospital, with 131 beds, was merged with the college hospital, thus raising the number of beds to a total of 344. The beds, all of which are free, are distributed amongst the different departments of the college and the hospital, namely surgical, medical, obstetrics and gynaecological, paediatrics, ear, nose & throat, opthalmological, tuberculosis, diphtheria, emergency etc., as is required by the regulations governing hospitals attached to teaching institutions. There are two hostels attached to the college, one accommodating 156 male and the other 9 female students.

Technical education

The first technical institution of the district was opened in Vishnupur in 1922. In its initial stage, the Vishnupur Technical School had a few trade courses only and by 1947 it was in a moribund condition. The Education Department of the Government of West Bengal reorganized the institution for conducting Diploma and Certificate courses in Engineering and Draughtsmanship in 1949 and the name of the reorganized institution was changed to K. G. Engineering Institute, Vishnupur after the name of Krishna Govinda Goswami, the then S. D. O. of Vishnupur, who took a lot of interest in its establishment. It is a Government-sponsored institution and is affiliated to the State Council for Engineering and Technical Education of the Government of West Bengal. The institution admits 60 students each year for the three-year course in Licentiate in Civil Engineering, 120 for the Licentiate in Mechanical Engineering course for 3 years, 60 for the three-year course in Licentiate in Electrical Engineering and 20 for the Draughtsmanship Certificate Course for 2 years. The average percentage of passes during the 5 years from 1959 to 1964 was 63 in the L. C. E. examination, 84 in the L. M. E,

examination, 71 in the L. E. E. examination and 47 in the D. C. C. examination. There is provision for awarding stipends and scholarships to 10% of the students. The institution has its own hostels providing accommodation to 335 students.

The Māliārā Industrial School in P.S. Barjora, a technical institution receiving recurring grant-in-aid from the State Government, imparts training in certain engineering trades like wood-craft, small engineering repairing works etc.

The Wesleyan Mission School in Bankura town once had a technical workshop attached to it in which Christian boys alone were given training in carpentry, cane-weaving, shoe-making and hand-loom weaving.[1] It has since been shifted to the Mission's establishment at Sāreṅgā where it is still running.

The Sikshā Saṅgha at Vishnupur and the various leprosy after-care homes and colonies in the district also run training courses in useful arts and crafts.

The State-managed Government Weaving Training School in Bankura town was established in 1911. It is financed jointly by the State Government and the Zilla Parishad and admits 13 students per year who do not have to pay any tuition fees. The vocational courses in weaving, dyeing and printing run for a year each. The teaching staff consists of a Head Master and a Second Master. The pupils are usually from weaver families. There are two smaller weaving schools, one at Simlapal and the other at Raipur, run by the State Government.

Teachers' training institutions

The earliest information about the existence of teachers' training institutions in the district comes from the First Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in Bengal: 1892-97 (p. 96) which mentions Bankura Training School at Bankura town, meant for the training of male teachers, and Bankura Wesleyan Training School at the same place, meant for training lady teachers. Both used to receive government aid. These schools taught teachers of Primary schools only.

After the establishment of the Methodist Church centre at Sāreṅgā, the Bankura Wesleyan Training School was shifted there and became a co-educational institution. The Training School in Bankura town was raised from the status of an aided school to that of a State-managed institution. Another institution for training of primary teachers has been functioning in Vishnupur since before independence.

In 1951, there were four institutions in the district for training of primary teachers, namely the Bankura Primary Teachers' School, the Vishnupur Primary Teachers' Training School, the Sāreṅgā Primary Teachers' Training School and the Sābrākon Junior Basic Training College. As has already been stated, after the introduction of Basic

[1] W. W. Hornell—op.cit. p. 109.

training in the district, the Sāreṅgā Primary Teachers' Training School was upgraded to a Junior Basic Training College to train teachers for Junior Basic schools.

Cultivation of fine arts

Vishnupur has been a noted centre for the cultivation of North Indian classical music since the 16th century. (The growth and characteristics of the special style (*gharānā*) of Dhrupad singing which developed here has been dealt with in Appendix B of this chapter). It is, therefore, natural that institutions for imparting training in music should grow up in Vishnupur. As early as in 1901-1902, there were four regular schools in the district teaching the elements of Hindustani classical music of which two were situated in Vishnupur.[1] These institutions aimed at training musicians who would become teachers of music.[2] In April 1917, another music school was opened at Vishnupur and the total intake capacity of all the three institutions increased to 50 pupils yearly. The Seventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal for 1922-27 made a special mention of the foremost of the music institutions in Vishnupur. It said: "the question was raised whether it might be possible to improve the school at Vishnupur (for the cultivation of music) into a first-rate institution with liberal grants from the department. Vishnupur in the Bankura district has always been noted for musicians and it is in the fitness of things that the music school there should be improved."[3] In 1950, there were altogether four music schools in the district receiving Government aid, two of which were in Bankura town and two in Vishnupur. Of the Vishnupur schools, one was for boys and the other for girls. One of the schools in Bankura town is named the Tāntrik Music School.[4] The oldest and the most distinguished of such schools in Vishnupur was upgraded in 1945 to a music college and named the Rāmsaran Music College. In 1964 all these four schools were recognized institutions receiving Government aid. The Bankura Music School in Bankura town has been running since the middle of the 19th century while the other music school there was established in 1945. The Rāmsaran Music College at Vishnupur was started at the initiative of *Saṅgit Nāyak* Gopeswar Bandyopadhyay, a member of the illustrious family of musicians of Vishnupur. The college imparts education both in vocal and instrumental music and its diploma-holders receive titles of *Saṅgit Tirtha* (vocal and instrumental) and *Jhaṅkār Tirtha* (instrumental only) on successful completion of a five-year course.

Social education

Commenting on the growth of adult education in the district during

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[1] A. Pedler—Second Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in Bengal: 1897-1902. p. 44.

[2] W. W. Hornell—op. cit p. 166.

[3] K. Zachariah—Seventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal: 1922-27. Calcutta, 1928, p. 109.

[4] A. Mitra—Census 1951: West Bengal District Handbook: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. p. lix.

1942-47, the Eleventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal observed: "The circulating libraries in the district of Bankura helped adults to keep up the education they had received. Pallimangal Samities and socio-religious bodies like the Rāmakrishna Mission, Christian and Brahmo Missions and the rural youth clubs rendered valuable service in the villages. In such endeavours of the youth associations, they were guided and helped by the District Youth Welfare Council." (p. 61).

Adult education and social education, which had largely depended on private efforts before, became, after independence, a concern of the national government. This new approach to social regeneration has been responsible for setting up in the Bankura district a large number of literacy centres, social education centres, school-cum-community centres, night schools, folk entertainment units and libraries. The particulars of the libraries run by the social education branch of the State Education Department in the district in 1965 are given below :

LIBRARIES RUN BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN BANKURA DISTRICT : 1965

Type of library	Number	Total number of books in stock	Average issues per year	Average annual expenditure
Public Library (aided)	1,000	30,00,000	35,00,000	—
Library Centres	866	1,83,474	--	Rs. 300 per Library Centre
Rural Library	504	2,00,000	2,50,000	Rs. 1,980 per library
District Library	18	2,50,000	5,89,807	Rs.15,140 per library
Area Library	25	70,000	1,50,000	Rs. 2,085 per library

Mobile library

With a view to organizing better library services in the district, a District Library Association has been formed and housed in a building in Bankura town recently constructed at a Government cost of Rs. 78,000. The mobile unit of the District Library supplies books at regular intervals to Rural Libraries which in their turn supply books to the sub-centres by rotation, thus extending reading facilities to the people of far-flung villages.

Private libraries

Among the private libraries in the district which receive government aid and are not attached to any educational institution, those run by the Rāmakrishna Mission and the Gandhi Smārak Nidhi in Bankura town and the one attached to the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad are important. Most of the privately

managed libraries have, in recent years, come under the social education programme.

Cultural, literary and scientific societies

The foremost among the cultural, literary and scientific associations of the district is the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad which was established in November 1950 with the object of conducting research into the history and culture of the Mallabhum region and preserving the material expressions of that culture. It also aims at cultivation of the Bengali language and literature as they flourished in this part of the country in the past. Since its inception, the workers of this institution have been collecting old coins and manuscripts, icons and images, stone, brick and copper plate inscriptions etc. and preserving them in a museum. The organization has also made a fine collection of folk art objects, such as *paṭuā* paintings, silk and textile fabrics, artistic terracotta products of Sonāmukhi and Pānchmurā, brass-work by Dhokrā craftsmen etc. The exhibits are displayed in a museum called Āchāryya Jogeshchandra Purākriti Bhavan, named after an illustrious son of Bankura. The museum also contains palaeolithic and neolithic tools and implements, terracotta specimens from the Maurya period down to modern times, Jain and Hindu sculptures from the Gupta period onwards, examples of tribal ornaments and apparels, *dasāvatāra* and *nakshi* circular playing cards of Vishnupur etc. The old manuscript collection consists of some six thousand *pūthis* in Sanskrit, Prākrit and Bengali, some of which have been described earlier in this chapter. The library is stocked with valuable reference books on history, literature, language and culture of Bengal. The institution is still located in a rented house but is shortly going to have a building of its own on a plot of land donated by a member of the local Bhattacharyya family.

Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad, Vishnupur

Rabindra Saṁsad, Vishnupur

The Vishnupur Rabindra Saṁsad was established in 1957 with the principal object of cultivating Tagore music and the performance of his dance dramas. It imparts training in Rabindranath's songs as also classical and instrumental music. A new section devoted to the teaching of dancing was opened in July 1958 which has become very popular among local girls.

Cultural, literary and scientific periodicals

Newspapers and periodicals published from the district have been described in Chapter XV on Public Life and Social Service Organizations. While there is no journal devoting itself exclusively to scientific subjects, there is a solitary periodical in Bengali, the 'Runner', published from Bankura town, which mainly deals with literary and cultural matters. The other periodicals are of general interest with a strong bias for local news.

Cinema, in recent times, provides recreation to myriad people not only in towns but also in the countryside. The table[1] overleaf gives

[1] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

particulars of the 15 cinema houses functioning in the district in 1964-65.

Name of cinema house (P=permanent: T=temporary)	Location	Average annual attendance (in lakhs)
Chandidās Chitra Mandir (P)	Bankura Town	2.40
Binâpâni Picture Palace (P)	,,	2.00
Rupkathâ Cinema (P)	Vishnupur	2.50
New Cinema Kumār Talkies (P)	,,	3.00
Bijoyā Talkies (P)	Sonamukhi	2.00
Annapurnā Cinema (P)	Kotulpur	2.00
Ganesh Talkies (T)	Bibardā, P.S. Taldangra	1.25
Sri Durgā Talkies (T)	Simlapal	1.25
Sri Krishna Talkies (T)	Taldangra	1.27
Mahālakshmi Talkies (T)	Sāreṅgā, P.S. Raipur	1.25
Rāmakrishna Chitra Mandir (T)	Beliātore, P.S. Barjora	1.30
Pārbati Cinema (T)	Barjora	1.30
Sobhā Cinema (T)	Onda	1.25
Kamalā Chitra Mandir (T)	Indas	1.30
Suradhani Chitra Mandir (T)	Sāshpur, P.S. Indas	1.20
	Total	25.27

A total amount of Rs. 2,33,133.75 was collected from these cinema houses as amusement tax in 1964-65.

APPENDIX A

EDUCATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1960-61 & 1964-65

	1960-61	1964-65 (Provisional)
A. PRIMARY EDUCATION		
(1) No. of Primary schools	2,064	2,222
(a) Total enrolment of students	1,22,069	1,49,165
(b) Total No. of boys	83,410	98,791
(c) Total No. of girls	38,659	50,374
(d) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 36,47,789	Rs. 63,01,436
(2) No. of Junior Basic schools	75	108
(a) Total enrolment of students	6,476	11,563
(b) Total No. of boys	4,766	7,761
(c) Total No. of girls	1,710	3,802
(d) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 2,66,376	Rs. 6,83,687
B. JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION		
(1) (i) No. of Junior High schools	113	110
(a) No. of J. H. schools for boys	98	91
(b) No. of J. H. schools for girls	15	19
(c) No. of co-educational J. H. schools	—	—
(ii) Total enrolment of students	10,689	11,949
(a) Total No. of boys	8,787	8,415
(b) Total No. of girls	1,902	3,534
(iii) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 2,46,374	Rs. 2,12,347
(2) (i) No. of Senior Basic schools	16	26
(a) No. of S. B. schools for boys	8	17
(b) No. of S. B. schools for girls	8	9
(c) No. of co-educational S. B. schools	—	—
(ii) Total enrolment of students	863	1,809
(a) Total No. of boys	509	1,127
(b) Total No. of girls	354	682
(iii) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 73,239	Rs. 1,88,671

(Contd.)

EDUCATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1960-61 & 1964-65 (*Contd.*)

	1960-61	1964-65 (Provisional)
C. SECONDARY EDUCATION		
(1) (*i*) Total No. of X-class High schools	47	76
(*a*) No. of High schools for boys	46	73
(*b*) No. of High schools for girls	1	3
(*c*) No. of co-educational High schools	—	—
(*ii*) Total enrolment of students	13,170	19,947
(*a*) Total No. of boys	12,327	16,741
(*b*) Total No. of girls	843	3,206
(*iii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 4,06,873	Rs. 7,00,604
(2) (*i*) Total No. of XI-class Higher Secondary & Multipurpose schools	37	66
(*a*) No. of H. S. schools for boys	35	63
(*b*) No. of H. S. schools for girls	2	3
(*c*) No. of co-educational H. S. schools	—	—
(*ii*) Total enrolment of students	14,082	28,793
(*a*) Total No. of boys	12,650	25,127
(*b*) Total No. of girls	1,432	3,666
(*iii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 6,95,461	Rs. 21,47,760
D. GENERAL COLLEGIATE EDUCATION		
Total No. of colleges	3	3
(*i*) Total enrolment of students in Arts courses	939	1,260
(*a*) No. of boys in Arts courses	825	1,008
(*b*) No. of girls in Arts courses	114	252
(*ii*) Total enrolment of students in Science courses	1,054	1,238
(*a*) No. of boys in Science courses	1,027	1,210
(*b*) No. of girls in Science courses	27	28
(*iii*) Total enrolment of students in Commerce courses	83	411
(*a*) No. of boys in Commerce courses	83	411

(*Contd.*)

EDUCATION IN BANKURA DISTRICT: 1960-61 & 1964-65 (*Contd.*)

	1960-61	1964-65 (Provisional)
(*b*) No. of girls in Commerce courses	—	—
(*iv*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 1,74,763	Rs. 1,75,624
E. TECHNICAL EDUCATION		
(1) (*i*) No. of Technical schools (Certificate & Diploma endowing)	5	3
(*ii*) Total enrolment of students	656	154
(*a*) No. of male students	655	154
(*b*) No. of female students	1	—
(*iii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 1,83,950	Rs. 15,826
(2) (*i*) No. of Technical colleges (conferring Degrees)	—	1
(*ii*) Total enrolment of students	—	720
(*a*) No. of male students	—	720
(*b*) No. of female students	—	—
(*iii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	—	Rs. 2,13,684
F. MEDICAL EDUCATION		
No. of Medical colleges	1	1
(*i*) Total enrolment of students	225	296
(*a*) No. of male students	225	286
(*b*) No. of female students	—	10
(*ii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 1,50,000	Rs. 4,64,969
G. EDUCATION IN MUSIC & FINE ARTS		
No. of schools of music	7	5
(*i*) Total enrolment of students	329	201
(*ii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 4,380	Rs. 3,660
H. OTHER SCHOOLS		
(1) No. of schools (Basic Trg., P. T., Nursery, Oriental studies & Spl. others)	56	61 (Excluding Basic Trg. colleges)
(*i*) Total enrolment of students	1,023	1,044
(*ii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 99,839	Rs 56,060
(2) Adult (No. of schools)	276	222
(*i*) Total enrolment	18,273	5,286
(*ii*) Total direct Govt. expenditure	Rs. 61,609	Rs. 59,222

APPENDIX B

VISHNUPUR *GHARĀNĀ*

BY

RAJYESWAR MITRA*

Vishnupur is well known for the culture of *Dhrupad* songs in West Bengal. It is said that the fostering of *Dhrupad* commenced in right earnest from the time of the Malla king Raghunāth II (1694 to 1730 A.D.) and culminated in the establishment of a distinct style singular to Vishnupur known as the Vishnupur *Gharānā*.

In western India, *Gharānās* or different schools of Hindustani music arose as a natural course of development since Hindustani classical music was in common practice there. In Bengal, however, the position was not so as neither the Hindustani dialects were spoken nor the classical Hindustani music was in practice among the singers of Bengal during the 18th century. The contemporary aristocratic sections of Bengal used to maintain *Ustāds* for the sake of fashion and they only sang Hindustani classical songs as and when required. The Bengali singers, however, used to sing songs solely composed in their own language and although they borrowed different styles from Hindustani music for enriching their own, they did not consider it worthwhile to render Hindustani songs to their listeners. Hindustani music became popular in Calcutta towards the middle of the nineteenth century when reputed singers began to visit the city for earning and recognition. Wājed Āli Shāh, the last Nawab of Lucknow, was interned at Meṭiāburz in Calcutta during the period 1856-1887. He was a great patron of music and his house was a seat of musical intercourse. Brilliant singers used to visit him from outside the Province and local talents also tried to win his recognition. The result was that the Bengali singers became deeply interested in the western styles of Hindustani music and adopted Hindi *Dhrupad*, *Kheyāl*, *Ṭhumri* etc. Many of them hastened to identify themselves with the celebrated *Gharānās* with a view to achieving the title of *Ustād*. Gradually, the aristocrats in different parts of Bengal began to invite the exponents of the distinguished *Gharānās* and started schools in their localities. This, in short, is the account of the establishment of the different *Gharānās* in Bengal.

In the case of Vishnupur, however, the position was not the same. Vishnupur had embarked upon the cultivation of classical Hindustani music from the beginning of the 18th century and since then zealously guarded its own tradition. Thus it can be held without doubt that the Vishnupur school represents the oldest *Gharānā* of classical

*Rajyeswar Mitra, a well-known music critic, is also the author of several scholarly works on North Indian classical music.

Hindustani *Dhrupad* in Bengal. We have, however, to depend upon popular belief to ascertain the origin of *Dhrupad* singing at Vishnupur as no definite information is available as to who started this school. Rāmprasanna Bandyopādhyāy, the famous musician of Vishnupur, has stated in his *Saṅgita Manjari* that one Bāhādur Sen (Shāh Bāhādur), who happened to be a descendant of Tānsen, was brought from Delhi by Raghunāth II and was installed as his court musician with the object of spreading the classical music of Hindustan at Vishnupur. Many of the later writers as well as singers of Vishnupur believe that the musical tradition of Vishnupur owes its origin to this Bāhādur Sen. Rāmprasanna Bandyopādhyāy has also quoted the following song in his *Saṅgita Manjari* from the collection of his renowned father Anantalāl Bandyopādhyāy. This song, supposed to have been composed by Bāhādur Sen, extols the generosity of Raghunāth II.

সাহানা—চৌতাল

সব গুণ নিধান মহারাজ রঘুনাথ
তুঅ দরবার সায়ত পোহাবে।
অনেক গুণিজন বহুঁ চকসে আয়ে
ঔর সব অযাচক পদ পাবে॥
তুঁহিঁ দাতা বীর, সবকো কর বেপীর
বিক্রমসে দুরজন সব দূর যাবে।
তুঅ সম রাজ জগমেঁ নাহি দুজো
ইস্‌লিয়ে বাহাদুর নিশদিন গাবে॥

The identity of Bāhādur Sen, also known as Bāhādur Khān, is disputed so far as he is claimed as a descendant of Tānsen living at the time of Raghunāth II. Of the two persons holding the name of Bāhādur Khān, who come of the line of Tānsen's son Vilās Khān according to the family chart available from different sources, both happen to have lived towards the end of the 18th century and cannot be linked with the time of Raghunāth II. The composer of the foregoing song is mentioned only as 'Bāhādur' and not 'Bāhādur Sen' or 'Bāhādur Khān'. If any such singer was brought from Delhi, he was possibly not a descendant of Tānsen but might have obtained lessons from the *Ustāds* adept in *Seni* style. It will not be out of place to mention here that the original style of Tānsen was only retained by his ablest son Vilās Khān in the imperial Durbar and no special mention of his other sons is available in the Durbari chronicles. Vilās Khān gave his best to his son-in-law, Lāl Khān Gunasamudra, who was the leading singer in the court of Shāhjāhān. His son Khusāl Khān along with Visrām Khān retained the *Seni* style creditably till the early part of the reign of Aurangzeb. There were, of course, many singers of repute at Delhi afterwards; but the great tradition of Tānsen was lost with Khusāl Khān and Visrām Khān.

The direct descendants of Tānsen cannot, therefore, claim to retain much of the maestro's heritage as the bulk of his stock and tradition was carried forward by Vilās Khān and subsequently by his daughter's family. It is doubtful whether Vishnupur could get a fragment of this tradition from the so-called 'Bāhādur' who is stated to have been on the direct line of Tānsen residing at Delhi.

Nevertheless, it is true that Hindustani *Dhrupad* began to thrive at Vishnupur with the impetus given by the Malla king Raghunāth II, who was a sincere lover of music, as, otherwise, a vast stock of *Dhrupad* could not have accumulated by the time Anantalāl Bandyopādhyāy flourished in the middle of the 19th century. Some sections of the musicians of Vishnupur say that 'Bāhādur' was succeeded by Gadādhar Chàkravarty, who along with other contemporaries, namely Krishnamohan Goswāmy, Nitāi Nāzir and Brindāvan Nāzir, kept up the tradition to a later stage. No authentic details of their lives and achievements are, however, available.

Rāmsankar Bhaṭṭāchāryya, who lived during the latter half of the 18th century, may be recognised as the historic figure who firmly established the fame of Vishnupur as a seat of *Dhrupad* singing. He left a number of disciples who also became famous afterwards. Rāmkesab Bhaṭṭāchārya was a renowned exponent of the Vishnupur style of *Dhrupad* during the middle of the 19th century and obtained the patronage of Āshutosh Dev (Sātu Bābu) who himself was a musician of no ordinary merit. Along with him the name of Kesablāl Chakravarty deserves mention as he also enjoyed great reputation in Calcutta at the same time. Kshetramohan Goswāmy, one of the outstanding personalities in classical music, had his preliminary training from Rāmsankar at Vishnupur. He imparted training in the Vishnupur style to his disciples in the school started by Raja Sourindra Mohan Tagore in Calcutta. The other two of his illustrious contemporaries were Dinabandhu Goswāmy and Anantalāl Bandyopādhyāy. The latter was, in his time, the chief exponent of the Vishnupur style and had a large number of students of whom his own sons Rāmprasanna, Gopeswar and Surendranāth carried forward his tradition until recent times. Among the other singers, Jadunāth Bhaṭṭāchāryya and Rādhikā Prasād Goswāmy earned wide renown. The former, affectionately called 'Jadu Bhaṭṭa', is well known as a composer. Both of them had their initial training at Vishnupur. The tradition of the Vishnupur style is still alive at Vishnupur and other places. In Calcutta this school is represented by Ramesh Chandra Bandyopādhyāy, Satya Kinkar Bandyopādhyāy and others.

Vishnupur *Gharānā* has a large stock of songs composed by Hindus and Muslims alike and covering the entire Muslim period. Among the most famous, mention may be made of Nāyak Gopāl, Nāyak Charju, Nāyak Baksu, Haridās Swāmy, Haridās Dāgur, Tānsen, Rāmdās, Surdās, Sujan Khān, Madan Rāi, Sobhān Khān, Vilās

Khān, Tān Taraṅg, Sarat Sen, Jagannāth Kavi Rāi, Gunsen, Gulāb Khān, Khushāl Khān, Sadāraṅg and Adāraṅg. This list of composers, which is by no means comprehensive, will at least show that the Vishnupur school is anything but sectarian as it encompassed in its fold various schools of *Dhrupad* and was able to establish a standardized process through long decades of sustained efforts.

The singularity of the Vishnupur school of music lies in its simplicity. There is nothing artificial in the rendering which is very methodical. While the basic principles of singing a *Dhrupad* song are meticulously followed, excesses of technicalities are carefully avoided. Besides the form, the Vishnupur school lays special stress on the purity of the *Rāga* as well as the pronunciation or the *vāni* of a song. In some cases the specifications of certain *Rāgas* differ from those obtaining in other schools of music in Western India. This simple and orthodox style, or. in other words, the unsophisticated way of presentation, also corroborates the fact that the Vishnupur school can rightfully claim a tradition of antiquity, be it from the line of Tānsen or any other source.

APPENDIX C

RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE AND JOGESCHANDRA RAY VIDYANIDHI: A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THEIR CAREER

BY

PULINBIHARI SEN*

RAMANADDA CHATTERJEE (1865-1943), the third son of Srinath and Harasundari Devi and publicist, educationist and social reformer, was born on May 29, 1865 (*Jyaiṣṭha* 17, 1273 B.E.) at Pāṭhakpārā in Bankura town. He had his early education at Bankura, where, in his formative years, he came under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj through one of his teachers, Kedarnath Kulabhi.

He passed the Entrance Examination in 1883 from Bankura Zilla School, standing fourth in order of merit; then he came to Calcutta for further studies, where he was educated at Presidency College, St. Xavier's College and City College, and took his B.A. degree in 1888, standing first in the first class in English (Honours). He got his M.A. in English in 1890.

Already inspired by the ideals of emancipation set forth by the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj, he came in direct contact, while in Calcutta, with its leaders and their social and intellectual activities. Pundit Sivnath Sastri specially, who was not only a religious and social reformer but also an ardent patriot, had a deep influence on him. It was he who had inspired a group of young men of the Brahmo Samaj, headed by Bipinchandra Pal, to sign a pledge which declared, among other things, that self-government was the only form of government ordained by God, and that the signatories would not serve under an alien government even if that meant poverty and privation. Ramananda was then too young to be one of the original signatories to this pledge, but he held to this vow, taken early in his youth, all through his life.

The first indication of his strength of character and courage of conviction was his refusal to accept the State scholarship to study abroad which his success at the B.A. Examination had brought him. Instead, he accepted the post of a lecturer, on a small remuneration, in the City College, Calcutta, an institution established by the Brahmo Samaj, where he worked with distinction till 1895, when he joined the Kāyastha Pāṭhsālā at Allahabad as its principal.

Considered as a doyen among journalists in his mature years, Ramananda Chatterjee started his apprenticeship in journalism quite early in life. While a post-graduate student, he assisted in editing

*Pulinbihari Sen is well known for his researches on the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore. He also served for several years as an Assistant Editor of the *Pravāsī* under Ramananda Chatterjee.

the *Indian Messenger*, the journal of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, and contributed to various other journals, such as the *Sanjivani*, on topics of public welfare. Later, he successively edited a number of periodicals until he started publishing, in 1901, a Bengali monthly journal of his own, the *Pravāsi*, followed in 1907 by *The Modern Review*.

He had edited a number of journals before the *Pravāsi*: in 1890, the *Dharmabandhu*, a monthly devoted to religious and social reform; from 1892 to 1896(?), the *Dāsi*, the organ of Dāsāsram, an institution for serving the destitute: from 1897 to 1899, the *Pradip*, a literary miscellany. He also had a large share in launching the *Mukul*, a magazine for children, of which Sivnath Sastri was the editor.

Dāsāsram, an institution for the relief of the sick and the destitute, founded in 1891 by a band of young men whose only resource was their faith and selflessness and who called themselves *dāsas* or servants of the poor, was a unique philanthropic experiment. Ramananda was soon drawn to this circle and was later elected President of the Dāsāsram Committee. These devoted young men established a regular 'home' in 1892, which they called Sevālaya, with Ramananda Chatterjee as its Secretary. People suffering from contagious diseases and abandoned in the streets were often picked up and brought to the 'home' and nursed back to health; it also gave asylum to the invalid. It depended entirely on contributions received from friends.

Dāsāsram also made an attempt, with Ramananda Chatterjee as Secretary of a special committee constituted for the purpose, to rescue daughters of prostitutes and girls drifting into their association, and to found a 'home' where they could be given proper education and guidance for leading useful lives; but legal difficulties stood in the way.

Ramananda moved in 1895 to Allahabad as principal of Kāyastha Pāṭhsālā. His philanthropic activities continued. He organized with the help of his friend, Indubhusan Roy of Dāsāsram, relief to victims of plague that broke out at Allahabad; he was the first Secretary of an orphanage established after the famine of 1896 and was President of the Provincial Temperance Council founded to counter the drink evil.

While consolidating the work of Kāyastha Pāṭhsālā, he saw through an important reform in the educational administration of the United Provinces; this removed certain crippling measures imposed by the Government through conducting discouragingly stiff examinations in three classes in schools, deliberately designed to restrict the promotion of a large percentage of students to higher forms and thus restrict the spread of education. For this reform Ramananda agitated in the columns of the *Advocate*, which led to the appointment of a committee with him as a member, resulting ultimately in the

removal of this obstacle. He was also a fellow of the University of Allahabad for some time.

His journalistic activities during his stay at Allahabad were not confined to his contributions to the *Advocate* or the editing of the *Pradip*. He edited for one year (1899-1900) the English *Kāyastha Samāchār*; contributed to the *Hindusthan Review*; and, in 1901, founded the *Pravāsi*, which and *The Modern Review*, also founded (in 1907) and edited by him, constitute his principal claim to an abiding remembrance by his countrymen.

Soon the *Pravāsi* became the meeting ground for the leading literary men, thinkers, scholars and artists of Bengal; it was something more than a literary miscellany, a mouthpiece of Bengal's nationalist aspirations. And the editor's notes in it on the problems of the day, sober and impartial but forceful, added a new dimension to Bengali journalism. It gradually became the principal vehicle not only for Rabindranath Tagore's new literary creations as well as for his thoughts on political and social questions, but also for those of many other eminent literary men and scholars of Bengal. The journal also gave invaluable support to the new art movement initiated by Abanindranath Tagore, by publishing his works, which were then in many quarters looked down upon with derision. (Many years later, he published a number of paintings of Rabindranath Tagore, which, when first exhibited at that time, were considered by many as rather queer).

It may be noted that the first issue of the *Pravāsi* had an illustrated article by the editor on the Ajantā cave-paintings, when these were not so well known among the lay public; and he also published a monograph on Ravi Varma, the famous painter.

The singular feature in this pre-eminently literary monthly was, however, the editor's notes on political and social problems of the country, dispassionately argued, inevitably supported by statistics, but throbbing with patriotism.

Six years later (1907), he founded *The Modern Review*. In 1906, he had resigned the principalship of Kāyastha Pāṭhsālā, following certain differences of opinion with its authorities. A man of very lean financial resources, he now took an unprecedented step and braved the consequences of depending on his journals, the financial future of which was as yet very uncertain.

About a year after *The Modern Review* was first published, it incurred the wrath of the rulers and the editor was asked to make his choice between suspending publication and leaving Allahabad. He chose the second alternative and returned to Calcutta in 1908.

The Modern Review soon became to the whole of India what the *Pravāsi* already was to Bengal—a forum for leading thinkers and scholars, an efficient and good instrument for establishing the case for India's fitness for self-government and for counteracting the specious

arguments levelled against it by the alien rulers. He wrote incessantly, almost every month for about thirty-five years, on questions relating to self-government for India and her ability to conduct her own affairs; some of these notes and articles were collected, in three parts, in his *Towards Home Rule* (1917-1918?).

The editor's interest was not however confined to politics alone; he was almost equally known for his zeal for spreading education and social reform, for the emancipation of women and for the uplift of the depressed classes in particular.

In establishing the case for India's freedom, he soon received support from some eminent friends abroad. The most notable among them was the Rev. J. T. Sunderland of America, whose writings on India's plight under British rule were first published by Ramananda Chatterjee in his journal, and later in book form, *India in Bondage* (1928). This led to the arrest of the publisher, Ramananda Chatterjee, the imposition of a fine on him of Rs. 2,000 and confiscation of the stock.

An unintended tribute to the influence of *The Modern Review* was paid by the then rulers of India when it published, in its June 1934 number, a translation of the concluding chapter of Rabindranath Tagore's *Rāssiār Chiṭhi* (Letters from Russia), and the editor was warned that such articles must not be published in future. The book in original Bengali was published in 1931 and serialized before that, but the Government had then taken no notice. When these facts were pointed out in the British Parliament, the Under-Secretary of State for India replied that: "its publication in the forefront of a leading and widely read English magazine put a wholly different complexion on the case."

The contribution of *The Modern Review* to the cause of India's freedom has been thus described by Acharya Jadunath Sarkar: "Walter Bagehot characterised the first thirty years of the 19th century as a series of duel between the *Edinburgh Review* and Lord Eldon. We may say with equal truth that the first forty years of the 20th century in India were marked by a still longer duel between *The Modern Review* and the Tories in power over India's destiny."

In 1926, he was invited by the League of Nations to examine its working at first hand—a unique distinction for an Indian journalist of that time. He accepted the invitation and went to Geneva and from there to some other countries of Europe, although in order to be 'free from the least conscious or unconscious pressure of a sense of obligation on his mind', he declined the offer of the League to bear his travelling expenses.

In 1927, Soviet Russia, a country which he had planned to visit in 1926, extended an invitation to him to participate in the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, but he could not avail himself of the opportunity.

Ramananda Chatterjee was one of the earliest adherents of the Indian National Congress and he attended, as one of its delegates, a number of its earlier sessions, and addressed the Congress session at Banaras in 1905. Later he ceased to be identified with any particular political group so as to be in a better position to do his duty impartially as a journalist. In the late twenties, however, when he felt that Hindu interests were in jeopardy, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha and presided over its Surat session in 1929.

Though journalism continued to engage his best attention, in the closing years of his life, public institutions came to make greater demands on his time and sought his sagely counsel; and he travelled all over the country to preside over many conferences—literary, educational, social and political. He also came to be associated with many organizations that worked for the social, educational and economic welfare of Bankura, where, at Vishnupur, a college named after him, stands as his memorial.

The final year of his life, 1943, was crowded with felicitations offered on his birthday by many institutions which he had helped to grow—Visva-Bharati, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Indian Journalists' Association, Bankura Sammilani, Santiniketan Asramik Sangha; and an address was presented on behalf of the public by the Ramananda Birthday Celebration Committee.

He passed away on September 30, 1943. His grateful countrymen throughout India fittingly observed the centenary of his birth in May 1965.

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The proposal to collect his writings was revived on the occasion of his birth centenary and the National Library, Calcutta has prepared an index of his writings in Bengali and English.

He was also a contributor to *Asia* (New York); some of his articles in this magazine on India's struggle for freedom are: 'Civil Disobedience Movement in India', August 1930; 'This (The Government of India Act, 1935) is not Self-Government', January 1936; 'The Unity of India', August 1937.

The Ramananda Birth Centenary Number of *The Modern Review* has reproduced a considerable number of articles he contributed to different journals.

Rammohun Roy and Modern India; his introduction to *The English Works of Rammohun Roy* (Pānini Office, Allahabad, 1906) was issued separately in 1918 and a second edition is in print.

He also edited *The Golden Book of Tagore*—a homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and abroad in celebration of his seventieth birthday (December 1931), to which he contributed a long foreword. He had in fact consistently written on Tagore over years in his editorial notes in the two journals he edited, and it is essential for a biographer of Tagore to consult these notes.

ON RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE: Santa Devi, *Ramananda Chattopadhyaya O Ardhosatābdir Bāṅglā*, Pravāsi Press, Calcutta, *n.d.* Jogeschandra Bagal, *Ramananda Chattopadhyaya*, Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad, Calcutta, January 1965. The special numbers and supplements of journals, published on the occasion of the birth centenary of Ramananda Chatterjee, especially *The Modern Review*, the *Pravāsi*, the *Jayasri*, the *Kathā-Sāhitya* and the *Tattva-Kaumudi*, which brought together some useful material on his life and work.

JOGESCHANDRA RAY (1859-1956) was born at the village Digrā in Hooghly district on October 20, 1859, but by long association and complete identification with the people of Bankura, where he resided continuously for thirty years, his name stands inseparable from Bankura; he became a man of Bankura, a *Bānkri* as he called himself; and by painstaking research he tried to establish that the poet Chandidās hailed from Chhatna in Bankura.

He came to Bankura as a boy and was there in school for a year or so. His father was a Sub-Judge, and had thought of settling there, but fate decreed otherwise. After his father's early death, Jogeschandra, then a student at Bankura Zilla School, had to leave Bankura. He had a brilliant career as a student. He took the M.A. degree of Calcutta University in 1883. The same year he joined the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack as a science teacher. This college he served for over thirty-five years, excepting some brief spells in other colleges. On retirement, he returned to Bankura (1920) and settled there.

This was briefly his career, uneventful and placid, but full of intellectual activities astonishing in their range as well as intensity. His interests embraced Indian astronomy, many branches of ancient Indian culture, old Bengali literature, Bengali grammar, philology and lexicography. His interests were not however confined to antiquarian subjects only; he made constructive suggestions on many social and economic problems of the day and commented on current literary trends. He made comprehensive proposals on educational reform in his two books, *Sikhsā-Prakalpa* and *Kalikātā Visva-Vidyālayer Sikhsā-Saṁskār*. His prose style was peculiarly his own, conversational, simple, direct and clear, free from rhetoric and ostentation.

The *Pandita Sabhā*, an association of scholars of Orissa, hailed him in 1910 as *Vidyānidhi*—the abode of learning; and other academic honours came crowding on him in the closing years of his life. In 1940, he was awarded the Sarojini Basu Medal for his researches in Bengali language and literature, followed by the award of Jagattārini Medal for his distinguished contributions to Bengali literature. In 1951, the Government of West Bengal awarded him the Rabindra Memorial Prize. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, which had elected him a Vice-President for many years and President for one term and also an honorary member, held, in 1947, a reception in his honour at Bankura. Utkal University awarded him the degree of D. Litt. (*honoris causa*) in 1955; the next year, Calcutta University held a special convocation at Bankura for conferring on him the degree of D. Litt. (*honoris causa*).

He passed away on July 30, 1956. A museum of antiquarian objects of Bankura, for which he had pleaded for many years, was established as a memorial to him at Vishnupur in 1960.

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CHAPTER XIV

MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

SURVEY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL FACILITIES IN EARLY TIMES

A detailed survey of the state of public health and medical facilities available in the district of Bankura in early times is admittedly a difficult task. Even so, a fairly good picture may be had by studying the scattered materials including *Āyurvedic* texts and connected literary sources.

Numerous manuscripts on the *Āyurvedic* system of medicine have been collected from a number of villages in Bankura by the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad which are now preserved in the Parishad library. These documents incorporate the Hindu materia medica which, according to Hunter, "embraces a vast collection of drugs belonging to the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, many of which have now been adopted by European physicians."[1] Lord Ampthill's speech at the opening ceremony of the King's Institute of Preventive Medicine at Madras in 1905 is worth recollecting in this connexion. He said that down to the close of the seventeenth century, European physicians learnt the science from the works of Arabic doctors while the Arabic doctors, many centuries before, had obtained their knowledge from the works of great Indian physicians such as *Dhanwantari*, *Charaka* and *Susruta*. It is a strange circumstance in the world's progress, he said, that the centre of enlightenment and knowledge should have travelled from East to West leaving but little permanent trace of its former existence in the East.[2] The manuscripts recovered from Bankura bear evidence of the strides the Hindus had made in the fields of pathology, therapeutics, surgery, physiology and genealogy.[3] The very fact that they are numerous and were written as early as the 15th and 16th centuries confirms the belief that this indigenous system of medicine could not have flouri-

[1] W. W. Hunter—Imperial Gazetteers: India. Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV, London, 1876, has given a detailed list of some 69 vegetable drugs indigenous to Bankura district. The then Civil Surgeon of Bankura had, however, reported to Hunter that "the Kabirajs, or native medical practitioners, who have not been brought up in our schools, are a very ignorant class of men."

[2] Durgadas Lahiri—*Prithibir Itihās*, Vol. III. Howrah, 1319 B.S.

[3] "It is no doubt interesting to find among the operations of those ancient surgeons those of lithotomy and extraction of foetus *ex utera;* and that no less than 127 surgical instruments are described in their 'works'."—Dr. Royle's Antiquity of Hindu Medicine. London, 1937.

"It is clear that the *Charak*, the *Susruta*, and the treatise called *Nidān* or diagnosis, and others on poisons, diseases of women and therapeutics, all familiar to Hindu science, were translated and studied by the Arabs."—Prof. H. H. Wilson in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Old Series, VI.

shed without an extensive popular base. It is remarkable that the places from where these manuscripts along with other treatises were recovered—Vishnupur, the celebrated seat of Sanskrit learning patronized by the Malla kings, Chābrā near Onda, Kākilyā, Pātrabākhrā, Kudrivā (near Peno), Gāmidyā and Rāmsāgar—all lie in the vicinity of the Dwarakeswar river. That the incursion of civilization into the densely wooded tracts now comprising the Bankura district followed the courses of the principal rivers of the region has already been discussed in the chapter on History and the discovery of these manuscripts from one of such areas lends support to the same belief.

It was obviously beyond the scope of these texts to indicate the existence of any organization to look after public health or to record the state of health and sanitation at any point of time. There is no evidence to show that even in the early British period there was a hierarchy of medical officers stationed at convenient places to supervise the physical well-being of the populace. Even then, it would be wrong to suppose that people of those days, when they fell ill, could not get any medical treatment, for there must have been physicians practising the *Āyurvedic* or *Unāni* systems of medicine.[1] The very existence of a clean, healthy and well-planned city like Vishnupur indicates that in the 17th century, public health amenities were not entirely lacking in the district. Indeed, a traveller visiting Vishnupur even today will be impressed by its drainage system, the eight spacious tanks that supplied fresh water to the citizens and the moats and embankments which resisted pollution. Centuries of neglect, however, has rendered these public utility undertakings incapable of providing the amenities once enjoyed by the citizens of Vishnupur.

The British period

The annual administrative reports indicate that in the last quarter of the 19th century the British rulers for the first time paid serious attention to the problem of public health in Bankura when several epidemics visited the district. From Dr. V. L. Watt's account in O'Malley's old Bankura Gazetteer it appears that malaria, cholera and small-pox were 'occasionally epidemic'. In Vishnupur subdivision and Onda police station the population decreased by as much as 20.6 per cent between 1872 and 1891. A fever of an epidemic nature ravaged the district in 1855 and 1864 and also in the famine year of 1866. Since then Bankura had experienced at least seven epidemics: in 1873-74 measles, cholera and small-pox, in 1881-82 Burdwan fever, in 1890 and 1901-02 small-pox, in 1919-20 influenza, in 1931 malaria and in 1944 the epidemic following the famine of 1943. Such calamities necessitated the introduction in 1892 of a regular system of registering births and deaths, besides a good deal of pre-

[1] W. W. Hunter—Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IV. London, 1876, pp. 302-04.

ventive work based on the principles of scientific immunology against malaria, small-pox and other endemic and epidemic diseases. A vaccination drive was launched for the first time in 1874-75 under the guidance of Dr. Conolly. The last quarter of the 19th century witnessed an intensification of the vaccination drive. The Compulsory Vaccination Act of 1880 was extended to the municipal areas of Bankura, Vishnupur and Sonamukhi and O'Malley states that vaccination was not unpopular even in the areas where it was optional.

The earliest effort to combat the endemic diseases dates back to 1839, when the Bankura Charitable Dispensary was established.[1] In 1891, there were only four dispensaries in the district for a population of 10,63,253. In 1907, E. A. Gait reported[2] that Bankura (and Birbhum) "enjoy the unenviable reputation of harbouring a greater number of lepers in proportion to their population than any other tract in the whole of India." The Bankura Leprosy Home and Hospital (Bryan's Leper Home) was established in 1902.[3] The Methodist Mission Society took the initiative in this philanthropic work and made necessary arrangements while the Mission to Lepers (Wesleyan Mission) provided the finance. In 1908-09, Government made a grant of Rs. 1,872 to the institution. Between 1912 and 1936, there was no appreciable increase in the number of lepers treated at the Home. A report of 1929-30, however, described leprosy as an epidemic disease and revealed that it was much more common in Bankura than was previously supposed. The Edith Home started work in 1904 as an asylum for the untainted children of lepers. The annual reports on the administration of Bengal do not specify the number, the year and the location of medical institutions that were set up in Bankura in the present century. We, however, gather from O'Malley's account[4] that by 1908 there were 9 dispensaries in the district of which "only three, viz., the Zanāna Hospital and the dispensaries at Bānkurā and Bishnupur, have accommodation for indoor patients. In the Bānkurā dispensary 28 beds are available for in-patients, viz., 20 males and 8 females; in the Bishnupur dispensary there are 8 beds for in-patients (6 males and 2 females); while the indoor ward of the Lady Dufferin Hospital has 2 beds. The other dispensaries are situated at Ajodhyā, Khātrā, Kotalpur, Māhārā, Rāipur and Sonāmukhi. There was also a dispensary at Rol, established in 1901, but it was closed in the year 1904. These

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[1] ibid. pp. 302-04.

[2] E. A. Gait—Census of India 1901, Vol. VI. The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories. Part I—The Report. Calcutta, 1902. p. 290.

[3] L. S. S. O'Malley thus wrote in the old Bankura District Gazetteer (1908): "In the year 1901, the Rev. J. W. Ambery Smith, who was then stationed in Bankura, opened up negotiations with the Mission to Lepers in India and the East; and the result was that, on an appeal being made, Mrs. Bryan, a lady resident in Brighton, offered to build the whole asylum including a church for Divine worship."

[4] ibid. p. 84.

institutions are gradually gaining popularity, especially in the malarious tracts adjoining Kotalpur, the people generally being willing to avail themselves of the benefit of the European system of medical treatment, provided it is given free of cost. They are extremely apathetic, however, in subscribing to the upkeep of the dispensaries, for well-to-do people, who can afford the cost of treatment by a private practitioner, seldom resort to a charitable dispensary for medical aid themselves and will not subscribe for the benefit of others."

In 1910, for the first time, 'sketch projects for water-supply schemes' were under consideration of the Sanitary Board and in 1916 the first of such schemes was completed in Bankura town. Since 1922 various other sanitary improvement and water-supply schemes have been taken up by the Sanitary Engineering Department and the Public Health Department.[1] There are, however, reasons to believe that the district did not fully utilize the services of the Public Health Department. In 1929, the Public Health Laboratory examined 3,681 chemical, 5,663 bacteriological and 3,486 food samples of which none was sent up by the District Board of Bankura. Instances are many in the first quarter of the 20th century of a falling off in the number of vaccinations given in comparison with other districts although a record, in this behalf, was set up in the last quarter of the 19th century. However, in 1934, Bankura had the distinction of being one of the two towns in Bengal besides Calcutta, which utilized the services of trained nurses.

The medical geography of Bankura

The western parts of the district enjoy a drier climate and the high and undulating terrain with porous soil offers a better drainage there ensuring salubrity. "Towards the east of the Bishnupur subdivision the land is low-lying and badly drained, and the climate is unhealthy. . . . This tract adjoins the malarious parts of Burdwan and Hooghly districts and it is noticeable that when the Burdwan fever was introduced[2] from the adjoining thanas of Galsi and Khandaghosh in Burdwan, it caused a heavy mortality here, while its westward progress was checked on reaching the high ground in the west of the subdivision. The thanas of Indās and Kotalpur are particularly unhealthy, extensive areas being water-logged, while the country is studded with large tanks containing unwholesome water from which the people obtain their drinking supply."[3] The Bankura subdivision situated to the west not only did not suffer much from the Burdwan fever but its population actually increased between 1872 and 1891,

[1] Source: Annual Report on the Administration of Bengal.

[2] It is remarkable that the Burdwan fever spread *pari passu* with the deterioration of the main rivers, the life-lines of Bankura, after 1870. Until the East Indian Railway was opened in 1855, coal was carried by boats and the Damodar was navigable up to Mejia. The Dwarakeswar was navigable up to Bankura for part of the year until about 1880. That the spread of tropical diseases is related to the deterioration of the rivers needs no elaboration.

[3] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetters: Bankura. p. 79.

while that of the Vishnupur subdivision, situated to the east, declined over the same period in spite of the superior fertility of its soil. The Vishnupur subdivision is ill-drained and liable to floods, the effects of which are accentuated by dams and weirs thrown across the rivers and creeks for irrigative purposes. They make it a very malarious tract indeed.[1] It can be inferred from available information that the incidence of tropical diseases (some of which have occasionally raged as epidemics) has been directly proportional to the natural unhealthiness of this area.

VITAL STATISTICS

General standards of health: important causes of mortality

Against an increase of only 18.2 per cent in the population of the district in 50 years between 1901 and 1951, there was a sizable increase of 26.2 per cent in the district population between 1951 and 1961, due mainly to increasing birth and decreasing death-rates during the 1951-61 Census decade, attributable to improved methods of health and sanitation. The table below gives the percentage and density variation in the population of the district between 1891 and 1961.

		Decennial percentage variation (Subdivisionwise)		Density variation (per sq. mile) (Districtwise)		(Subdivisionwise)	
Year	Population	Sadar	Vishnupur	Rural	Urban	Sadar	Vishnupur
1891	10,69,668	+ 7.0	− 4.4	389	2,065	358	529
1901	11,16,411	+ 2.8	+ 7.2	405	2,182	368	567
1911	11,38,670	+ 4.9	− 3.1	412 + 1.72%	2,344 + 7.38%	386	549
1921	10,19,941	− 7.0	−16.9	366 −11.32%	2,495 + 6.44%	359	456
1931	11,11,721	+13.6	− 0.7	398 + 8.91%	2,756 −10.43%	408	453
1941	12,89,640	+18.8	+ 9.2	457 +14.67%	3,770 +36.78%	484	495
1951	13,19,259	+ 3.1	+ 0.3	467 + 2.25%	3,878 − 2.7%	499	496
1961	16,64,513	+21.7	+38.3	588 +25.94%	4,740 +29.11%	608	686

The 1891-1900 decade

Writing in 1908, O'Malley had observed that "previous to 1892, there were several changes in the system of registering births and deaths. In 1869, the duty of reporting deaths was imposed on the village *chowkidārs* and in 1876 the system was extended to births; but the returns received were so incomplete that they were soon discontinued, and, except in towns, deaths alone were registered until

[1] Asok Mitra—Census 1951: West Bengal District Handbooks : Bankura. pp. xx-xxi.

1892, when the collection of statistics of births as well as of deaths was ordered and the system now in vogue was introduced. Under this system vital occurrences are reported by the *chowkidārs* to the police and the latter submit monthly returns to the Civil Surgeon, by whom statistics for the whole district are prepared."[1] It would be wise, in the above context, not to rely very much on the vital statistics collected prior to 1891. During the 1891-1901 decade, the district population increased by only 4.4 per cent, a fact ascribable to the very large number of emigrants leaving the district at the time, the high cholera mortality between 1894 and 1897 and the famine of 1897. It is, however, interesting to note that the district recorded the lowest death-rate (18.79) of the period up to World War II in the year 1898. The highest birth-rate of 41.18 over the same period was also recorded during the same decade in 1899.

The 1901-1910 decade: 'depopulation' of the Vishnupur subdivision

The small-pox epidemic of 1901-02 had a calamitous effect on the population of the Vishnupur subdivision as would be evident from the following table giving decennial figures of inhabited villages in the subdivision. The fact that 958 or about 17.1% of the total number of villages in 1901 were deserted within a period of 10 years should have been regarded as a calamity. But the contemporary reports on the administration of Bengal leave us in the dark about this development. One is inclined to infer that such large-scale desertion was due either to the epidemic which left many of the villages on the brink of complete ruin or to emigration or—what is more likely—to both, one following the other.

Year	1961	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901
No. of inhabited villages	3,553	3,525	3,522	3,476	3,999	4,634	5,592

The 1911-1920 decade

The desertion of villages in the Vishnupur subdivision continued up to 1931. During the 1911-1920 decade, the Sadar subdivision was also similarly affected inasmuch as the mortality there during 1918-19 was over 40 per thousand and in 1919-20 alone, the district lost 2.5 per cent of its population from influenza. Towards the middle of 1916 a famine was declared and although the Bankura Damodar River Railway, then under construction, gave employment to many cultivators, it was hardly sufficient to check emigration to the tea gardens.

The 1921-1930 decade

Between 1921 and 1931 malaria raged only in an endemic form. Economic distress and such other short-term events led to some emigration but the establishment of rice mills etc. in the district also attracted labourers from outside. During 1927-28 all but six districts of Bengal showed an increase in the death-rate over the decennial mean rate and Bankura was one of them. The rate

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[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 79.

of 'depopulation' of Vishnupur subdivision was substantially reduced mainly due to preventive work against malaria, small-pox and other epidemic diseases. Writing about this period, A. Mitra reported that "Ranibandh, Raipur and Simlapal remained free from epidemic diseases and enjoyed a succession of good seasons and improvements of village sanitation."[1]

The 1931-1940 decade

The 1931-1940 decade began with a malaria epidemic and in 1934 the combined flood and drought worsened the situation. In spite of these, this decade, of all the pre-war ones, registered the largest population increase (16.0%). In Gangajalghati, Barjora, Mejia and Saltora police stations, where Health Centres were opened with consequent improvement in rural health and sanitation, the population increased on an average by 22 per cent while in the entire Vishnupur subdivision not a single police station suffered any shrinkage of population. This decade is also noted for highest increase in urban density (+36.78%). Bankura along with Birbhum shared during the decade the distinction of evolving an improved system of collection of vital statistics through verification in the rural areas.

The 1941-1950 decade

Between 1941 and 1951, the chief events were the famine of 1943 and the epidemic of 1944, the devastations of which have already been described in Chapter IV. The calamities decreased the population of Onda, Gangajalghati, Mejia and Saltora police stations in Sadar subdivision and Joypur, Sonamukhi and Patrasayer thanas in Vishnupur subdivision. The deleterious effect was reflected in the decreased percentage (from 58.5 in 1941 to 52.5 in 1951) of working-age (15 to 60 years) people. The 1951 Census recorded (on the 1941 population) a mean birth-rate of 12.15 and a mean male death-rate of 21.1 and a mean female death-rate of 20.45. The table below deals with some selected causes of mortality during selected years of the 1941-50 decade.

AILMENTWISE DEATH-RATES DURING SELECTED YEARS: 1941-50

Year	Sex	Cholera	Fever	Small-pox	Dysentery, Diarrhoea & Enteric fevers	Respiratory diseases other than T.B. of lungs	Child-birth	Malaria	T.B. of lungs
1943	Male	3.4	19.1	—	1.8	1.6		8.7	0.4
	Female	3.8	18.5	—	1.5	1.0	0.3	9.3	0.1
1945	Male	0.1	11.8	1.7	0.8	1.6		3.6	0.5
	Female	0.3	11.8	1.6	0.8	0.9	0.2	3.9	0.1
1947	Male	0.3	12.7	0.02	0.8	1.5		3.4	0.5
	Female	0.5	13.3	0.02	1.0	1.0	0.3	4.4	0.1
1949	Male	0.2	11.1	0.01	0.8	1.2		3.9	0.5
	Female	0.2	12.1	—	0.8	0.6	0.3	4.4	0.1
Average of 1941 to 1950	Male	0.6	12.7	0.2	1.1	1.5		4.4	0.5
	Female	0.7	13.1	0.2	1.1	0.9	0.3	4.7	0.1

[1] A. Mitra—Census 1951: West Bengal District Handbooks: Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. p. xxi.

The major diseases of the district, classified in order of their malignity, are fevers in general, malaria, various respiratory diseases, dysentery-diarrhoea-enteric fevers, cholera, tuberculosis and small-pox. During the famine years, the urban death-rate was higher due to a large influx of famine-stricken people from rural areas. The higher incidence of mortality from fevers as compared to that from respiratory diseases indicates that prevention of premature deaths was not possible.

The 1951-1960 decade

The situation changed materially during the 1951-1960 decade when there was a complete change in the very outlook on health care. It will be seen from a subsequent section of this chapter that the concepts associated with ill health have so changed in recent times as to bring about vast improvements in the operational fields effected through the Zilla Parishads, Community Development projects, various departments of the State and Union Governments as also the WHO and UNICEF.

The 1951-60 decade witnessed high birth-rates and rapidly dwindling death-rates (see table below), the decline in the latter being due, firstly, to the expedition with which supply of potable water, eradication of carriers of diseases through insecticides and use of antibiotics were ensured even in rural areas, and, secondly, to a significant rise in the standard of living, sanitation and personal hygiene as also of general education. But birth-rates are likely, at least in the immediate future, to remain pretty high as social customs and broad outlook of the populace still favour early marriages and large families and as it could well be that with a reduction in infant mortality the number of girls surviving to reproductive age will increase and so cancel out any diminution in it that might otherwise occur.

VITAL STATISTICS FOR BANKURA DISTRICT: 1950-63

Year	Total births	Total deaths	Still-births	Infant deaths
1950	25,423	21,484	167	3,100
1951	34,377	17,450	223	3,187
1952	39,163	15,257	248	3,411
1953	41,415	15,069	262	3,133
1954	36,392	13,816	297	2,815
1955	41,555	14,862	363	2,976
1956	42,188	15,549	363	3,035
1957	37,056	18,412	245	3,091
1958	35,260	15,812	257	2,460
1959	42,630	11,263	567	2,479
1960	*	*	*	*
1961	35,283	13,013	*	2,048
1962	40,223	12,628	*	2,033
1963	38,911	13,350	*	1,790

*Figures not available

Over the 10-year period from 1948 to 1958, there was a significant fall in the death-rate in the district. The table below gives the mortality factors and the corresponding death-rates per thousand in 1948 and 1958.

	1948	1958
Cholera	0.6	0.2
Small-pox	0.4	0.5
Malaria	3.6	0.2
Fever (excluding malaria)	5.5	3.4
Dysentery & Diarrhoea	1.1	0.5
Relapsing fever	1.7	1.0
T.B.	0.4	0.2
Other diseases	5.2	3.5
Infant mortality	136.7	80.4
Maternity death-rate per 1,000 births	8.5	3.6
Total death-rate	18.1	9.3
Total birth-rate	21.3	22.4

Infant mortality perhaps reflects the health situation better than mortality in the other groups as occupational differences and many other non-medical factors do not influence the findings here. The steep decline in infant mortality alone permits us to conclude that the district was a much healthier place in 1958 than a decade ago.

Registration units

The annual report for 1963 on the state of health in West Bengal mentions seven categories of registration units from which monthly returns on vital statistics are usually received. These are: (1) Registrars of births and deaths in municipal areas, (2) Sanitary Inspectors, (3) Medical Officers of rural Health Centres, (4) Officers-in-charge of police stations, (5) railway Station Masters, (6) staff of public health units and (7) others. Of these, the 4th, 5th and 7th categories did not submit any returns during 1961, 1962 and 1963. The Health Department of West Bengal, therefore, concluded that the system for registration of vital statistics was deficient and defective even in 1963.

Model Health and Ideal Registration Unit Project

In keeping with the principle that systematic and effective health care could be ensured only when health statistics were accurate, a scheme for improving the collection of health statistics was initiated in January 1959. It provided, *inter alia*, for the setting up of Model Health and Ideal Registration Units in selected Unions provided with Health Centres, keeping of records in teaching medical institutions as also half-yearly censuses of births and deaths in selected urban and rural areas. The Model Health and Ideal Registration

Unit Project ensures complete registration of births and deaths as well as supply of information on the health needs of the people of selected localities to the Medical Officers of Health Centres. The Unions having Health Centres which were selected for the Model Registration scheme were sub-divided into smaller areas as Basic Public Health Units with a population not exceeding 5,000 each. Every such unit was placed under the charge of wholetime trained staff who were responsible for complete registration of births and deaths, recording of correct causes of death as well as vaccination of the entire population under their care. The project now covers about 98% of the population in selected areas both in respect of registration and vaccination and the age-old practice of collection of vital statistics through the village chowkidars has been dispensed with in the areas under its operation.

Half-yearly censuses

As the present area covered by the above project is too small, half-yearly censuses of births and deaths are being conducted by all local Registrars of births and deaths since 1962. These officials select a compact area having a population of about 1,000 persons in the vicinity of their respective headquarters and visit each house there in July and January to ascertain the number of births and deaths occurring during the six months preceding the month of survey. The main object of the project is to obtain reliable statistics as well as to make the local Registrars and health personnel conscious of their duties in the context of inadequacy of the official registration system. With a view to properly assessing and evaluating this work, collection of annual administrative reports from all local Registrars has also been introduced since 1963. An analysis of these returns for Bankura for the same year reveals that the number of births and deaths officially registered were 38,911 and 13,350 respectively and that the local Registrars verified only 8,693 births and 3,076 deaths and in doing so detected as many as 813 births and 199 deaths officially unregistered. The number of omissions is very significant and it is more so when one takes into account the small proportion of the vital events verified. Another drawback reported was that only 4 birth and 124 death certificates were issued during the year under review.

Reporting of births and deaths by Grām Adhyakshas

Reporting of births and deaths by Grām Adhyakshas in their respective villages for only one Anchal in the district has been taken up as a pilot project since 1963 in collaboration with the Panchayats Directorate, West Bengal. Under the scheme the Grām Adhyakshas have been supplied with *hātchiṭhās* (note-books) for month to month recording of all births and deaths independently of the official registration system. It is considered that the work of registration of vital events can gradually be entrusted to the Panchayats as and when they prove their efficiency in the matter, this being the most economical way.

Rural and urban death-rates

The mortality figures available since 1961 are, however, more useful than those pertaining to the years preceding 1961 for broad generalizations. It is found from these latest figures that, compared to corresponding rural statistics, the urban birth-rates as well as death-rates are lower, the latter especially so, in the case of infant mortality. The lower infant mortality in urban areas is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to better medical facilities available in the towns. This, along with the decrease of death-rate (and especially of infant mortality) over a time, permits us to assume that the urban areas of Bankura are not unhealthier than the countryside and that the difference between rural and urban death-rates should be explained in other than ecological terms. As compared to that for the whole of West Bengal, the proportionately greater increase in urban death-rates in Bankura district over a period of three years from 1961 to 1963 suggests that this might be due to the local deterioration of certain physical urban conditions detrimental to health. The incidence of higher births as well as higher death-rates for the district as compared to those for the whole of West Bengal indicates that the average health of the district is worse than that of the State and that modern techniques have not made much headway towards removing or arresting a further deterioration, not to speak of improving the general health of the people of Bankura.

DISEASES COMMON TO THE DISTRICT

The diseases common to the district are tuberculosis, dysentery of all forms, leprosy, tetanus, measles and small-pox, malaria, typhoid, malignant neoplasms, allergic endocrine system, metabolic and nutritional diseases, anaemia, diseases affecting the nervous system and sense organs, meningitis, influenza, pneumonia, bronchitis, various heart diseases, gastritis, duodenitis, enteritis and colitis, diseases peculiar to early infancy and immaturity (unqualified), complications of pregnancy and child-birth, birth injuries. post-natal asphyxia, atelectasis and. lastly, infections of the newborn. For the incidence of these diseases, causes must not only be sought in the environments but also in the mode of life of the people. Overcrowded insanitary conditions in many areas are responsible for a good number of diseases and these, in turn, are related to certain factors--general deficiency of wholesome water, food and building materials, adverse social conditions etc.

Some of the more widespread diseases originate directly from environmental conditions. Cholera, typhoid and small-pox are seasonal in nature, while malaria, kala-azar and various other fevers are all spread by carriers, the proliferation of which is controlled largely by climate. Cholera breaks out in summer and early monsoon; measles and small-pox at the end of winter. Whenever these diseases rage, preventive and curative measures (inoculations, vaccinations, disinfections etc.) are intensified, if necessary, by mobile

units. Tetanus, dysentery, tuberculosis, other infective and parasitic diseases are caused by insanitary conditions and are, therefore, related mainly to man-made causes. A third group, namely anaemia, metabolic and nutritional diseases are due to malnutrition and poverty.

Malaria

The anopheles mosquito transmits blood infected with malaria parasite to persons she attacks. The immediate cause of the disease, the parasite, has two separate life-cycles, one in the human body and another in the mosquito. In the former, the parasites live and multiply in red corpuscles of human blood and also in certain internal organs, notably the spleen. On attaining maturity the parasites disintegrate to propagate new generations. These parasitic segments or spores are discharged from the corpuscles and synchronizing with their discharge comes the first stage or chill of the attack of fever. The young forms again enter fresh corpuscles and grow to maturity. In an untreated case the cycle is repeated indefinitely. The acute form of malaria has a rapid course. Chronic malaria may persist for years[1] and was found in endemic form, according to the Spleen Census of 1950-51, in the Sonamukhi, Vishnupur and Bankura police stations where children were affected thus perpetuating the disease.[2]

Prevention of malaria

It is difficult to eradicate malaria in irrigated tracts or in regions of flooded paddy fields. However, it has been sufficiently controlled by careful attention to potable water supply, drainage and use of insecticides. The death-rate from malaria prior to the introduction of malaria control measures varied from 4.0 in 1949 to 3.2 in 1950 whereas the corresponding figure for 1963 was only 0.02.

The first comprehensive malaria control scheme with residual insecticides was initiated in the district in 1950-51. In 1953-54 the State Government launched the National Malaria Control Programme in collaboration with the Government of India and the United States Technical Co-operation Mission (now called the USAID) and the first round of spraying (100 mgm. DDT equivalent per square foot) started from the middle of May and the second round (50 mgm. DDT equivalent per square foot) from the middle of November. The object was to kill all larvae of anopheles mosquitoes. Since 1958-59 the control measures were intensified into an eradication programme which consisted, *inter alia*, of covering areas with a lower incidence of the disease through house to house visits by malaria surveillance staff and continuance of the operation

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley in the old Bankura District Gazetteer (1908) observed: "The Malaria fevers observed in the district are of two varieties—the intermittent and the remittent. Both these varieties of malarial fever are amenable to treatment by quinine; and if attended to early, organic complications seldom occur."

[2] One of the methods of measuring the degree of malarial incidence in any locality is by determining the spleen-rate i.e. the percentage of children between the ages of 2 and 10 showing enlarged spleens.

until the reservoir of residual infection reached a level so low (namely occurrence of 0.5 malaria cases per thousand per year) that it could not become endemic again.

Effects of malaria prevention therapy

The malaria eradication measures were so successful that spraying was discontinued in the eastern half of the district in 1963 and from the rest in 1964. Malaria used to account for more than 40% of all cases treated in the hospitals and dispensaries of the district during the years prior to the spraying operations; the corresponding figure came down to less than 0.1% in 1964-65. In 1959-60, the highest spleen-rate was 0.4% (for Simlapal thana) whereas the same prior to the commencement of control operations was 55.9% (for Sonamukhi thana).

The Malaria Eradication Programme, so long as it was in operation in Bankura district, caused the State Government an average expenditure of Rs. 4.26 lakhs per annum. The programme called for the setting up of an independent organization consisting of units, zones, sub-units and sub-zones manned by a Medical Officer in overall command, 4 Supervisors each in charge of a zone, 17 Inspectors for the 17 sub-zones, besides a large number of field-staff and the usual office set-up at headquarters. Each Inspector had two or three spray-gangs—each composed of one Mate and 6 field-workers. Some 34 Mates and 204 field-workers were employed from the 15th of May till the 15th of November each year when actual spraying work was carried out. The M.E.P. unit was withdrawn from the district late in 1965.

Other diseases

Of the non-malarial fevers, the following are most common. Heat fever (locally called *ārhāiyā* as it is popularly supposed to last for only two and a half days) occurs during summer and is characterized by a sudden rise in temperature often as high as 105°F and coming down to normal after a few days even without treatment. The scorching heat generated by radiation from the rocky lateritic soil and the use of water impregnated with peroxide of iron cause constipation and congestion of the liver and give rise to a remittent type of fever which, unlike malarial fevers, yields to treatment usually within a fortnight. Enteric fever is common in the municipal towns occurring mainly in the vicinity of filthy drains. Meningitis occurs as an independent infection in children and with complications of the liver in adults. Cases of cerebro-spinal fever are not uncommon among persons who live in polluted atmosphere and have been specially noticed in dwelling houses adjoining cattle-sheds and dung-hills. At the change of seasons, particularly on the eve of winter, catarrah, bronchitis etc. often give rise to continued fevers which resemble influenza. Such seasonal fevers are mainly due to diurnal variations of temperature. Filariasis, caused by the bite of the culex mosquito and manifesting swollen extremities, is associated with a kind of fever which usually comes on at night.

Elephantiasis is more common in the western than in the eastern parts of the district. The congestion of the nasal mucous membrane, which is fairly common, sometimes gives rise to *nāsā* fever, the symptoms of which are heaviness in the head and uneasiness along the muscles on the nape of the neck. Among the other major types of fever are pleurisy, perintonitis, erysipelas and tuberculosis. Transmission and control of the last-named disease is an ever growing problem. Chronological estimates about the incidence of tuberculosis is, however, impossible as it has been grouped together with various other fevers in all previous enumerations. One encouraging fact, however, is that, compared to the average death-rate of 0.1 per thousand for the whole of West Bengal, Bankura is much better off with an incidence of 0.08 in respect of pulmonary tuberculosis. An extensive campaign for B.C.G. vaccination was launched in the district between 1956 and 1957. Blindness is more prevalent in Bankura than in most West Bengal districts.[1]

Leprosy

Leprosy is exceedingly common in Bankura. Popular belief has it that all types of leprosy are contagious and hereditary and that the excessive use of unwholesome meat is its principal cause. While only a few types of leprosy are infectious, it seems at least certain that it is prevalent mostly among the poor labouring classes, especially the Muslims, the Bauris and aboriginal tribes who are meat-eaters. B. Dey, a District Magistrate of Bankura, pointed out that in Khulna he found leprosy more common among the Bunas, who had migrated there from Bankura and the adjoining districts than among the local people. A number of private organizations and the State Government have taken certain steps for the control of this disease which include, on the official side, the establishment of the Gauripur Leprosy Colony, a big leprosy hospital six miles north-west of Bankura town, development of group colonies for lepers, advising isolation of infective patients and educating the public and the patients to avail themselves of the benefit of early diagnosis and treatment etc. The leprosy investigation centre run by the Hind Kusṭha Nibāran Saṅgha (Paschim Bangiya Sākhā) has also been taken over by the State Government since 1950 and it is now serving many villages within an endemic area. In 1955-56, a pilot project was started in parts of Bankura and Chhatna thanas covering 61.49 sq. miles and 43,761 people with centres at Monoharpur and Sānbāndhā for treatment, epidemiological studies and evaluation of the effects of therapy. The West Bengal Government has also established some 'after-care colonies'. The Bryan's Leper Home and the Edith Home, run by Christian missionaries on the outskirts of Bankura town, are also rendering valuable service to the lepers.

[1] A. Mitra—Census 1951 : West Bengal District Handbooks : Bankura. Calcutta, 1953. p. xxxiii.

The following table prepared from the reports of the Directorate of Health Services, West Bengal, indicates the chief diseases of the district and the deaths caused by them in recent years.

DEATHS FROM DIFFERENT DISEASES IN BANKURA DISTRICT

Diseases causing death	Number and rates of death per thousand					
	1961		1962		1963	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Pulmonary tuberculosis without mention of occupational diseases of the lungs	219	.1	185	.1	143	.09
Tuberculosis of respiratory system other than pulmonary without mention of occupational diseases of the lungs	255	.2	232	.1	265	.2
Cholera	8	.01	35	.02	20	.01
Dysentery (all forms)	367	.2	331	.2	309	.2
Diptheria	12	.01	6	*	27	.02
Whooping cough	8	.01	35	.02	63	.04
Leprosy	252	.15	198	.1	158	.09
Tetanus	332	.2	347	.2	357	.2
Small-pox	2	*	21	.01	566	.3
Measles	10	.01	20	.01	99	.06
Malaria	172	.1	81	.05	38	.02
Typhoid fever	452	.3	360	.2	377	.2
Malignant neoplasms including neoplasms of lymphatis & haematopoietic tissues	75	04	71	.04	91	.05
Other allergic, endocrine system, metabolic and nutritional diseases	842	5	877	.5	1016	.6
Anaemia	145	.1	155	09	135	.08
Vascular lesions affecting central nervous system	64	.04	48	.03	50	.03
Non-meningococcal meningitis	61	.04	36	.02	54	.03
Other diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	134	.01	140	.08	136	.08
Arteriosclerotic and degenerative heart disease	7	*	12	.01	20	.01

(Contd.)

DEATHS FROM DIFFERENT DISEASES IN BANKURA DISTRICT (*Contd.*)

Diseases causing death	Number and rates of death per thousand					
	1961		1962		1963	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Other diseases of heart	83	.05	34	.02	45	.03
Hypertension without mention of heart	45	.03	41	.02	50	.03
Influenza	115	.1	53	.03	15	.01
Pneumonia	702	.4	651	.4	756	.4
Bronchitis	219	.1	242	.1	260	.1
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	17	.01	25	.01	27	.02
Intestinal obstruction and hernia	11	.01	13	.01	15	.01
Gastritis, duodenitis, enteritis and colitis except diarrhoea of the new-born	281	.2	266	.2	216	.1
Cirrhosis of liver	26	.02	7	*	9	.01
Other diseases of digestive system	15	.01	13	.01	11	.01
Nephritis and nephrosis	38	.02	27	.02	24	.01
Complications of pregnancy, child-birth and puerperium	101	2.8	109	2.7	105	2.7
Birth injuries, post-natal asphyxia & atelectans	32	.02	53	.03	63	.04
Infections of the new-born including diarrhoea	71	.04	74	.04	70	.04
Other diseases peculiar to early infancy and immaturity unqualified	1341	.8	1016	.6	777	.4
Senility without mention of psychosis and ill-defined and unknown causes	5939	3.6	6359	3.7	6563	3.8
Suicide and self-inflicted injury	50	.03	64	.04	25	.01
Homicide and operations of war	16	.01	11	.01	12	.01
All other accidents	231	.1	199	.1	208	.1
Accidents caused by bites & stings of venomous animals and insects including snakebite	77	.05	67	.04	56	.03

(*Contd.*)

DEATHS FROM DIFFERENT DISEASES IN BANKURA DISTRICT (*Contd.*)

Diseases causing death	Number and rates of death per thousand					
	1961		1962		1963	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Other causes	186	*	116	*	119	*
Total deaths from all causes	13013	7.8	12628	7.4	13350	7.6

Source: Annual Reports on the State of Health of West Bengal (Vital and Health Statistics) for the years 1961, 1962 and 1963, Part-I by Lt. Col. N. C. Chatterjee (1961 & 1962), pp. 32-50 and by Dr. C. L. Mukherjee (1963), pp. 30-44, published by the Directorate of Health Services, West Bengal.

* Indicates negligible rates.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES

Organization for maintenance of public health and sanitation in urban and rural areas

Formerly, public health and medical facilities used to be the direct concern of District Boards while Civil Surgeons were entrusted with vaccination operations. Since 1920, District Health Officers under the District Boards have relieved the Civil Surgeons of their vaccination duties in rural areas and a chain of public health organizations has came into existence, on thana basis, with a Sanitary Inspector, a Health Assistant, a Medicine Carrier and a few seasonal Vaccinators for each such unit placed under the general supervision of each District Health Officer. Except the Bankura Sadar and Vishnupur Subdivisional Hospitals, which were managed by Government, all charitable dispensaries and leprosy clinics in the district were managed and financed at that time by the District Board. Since January 1959, Government assumed charge of the entire public health organization. Posts of Additional Health Assistants had been created earlier in 1945 for compilation of vital statistics and one such officer was attached to each rural Health Centre. Their services have since been provincialized.

Present arrangements

The present medical and public health set-up in the district is headed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (C.M.O.H.) who is helped by an Assistant C.M.O.H. in the discharge of his administrative duties. The District Health Officer (D.H.O.) supervises public health activities in the district and is especially responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. The District Medical Officer (D.M.O.) is in charge of the Sadar Hospital and usually relieves the C.M.O.H. of direct professional duties in respect of the district hospital, jail etc. He is assisted by an Assistant D.H.O. in the discharge of his responsibilities in connexion with public health activities including prevention of malaria, filaria and such other diseases. The Subdivisional Medical Officers are Superintendents of the subdivisional hospitals. The Subdivisional Health Officers are associated with all health

activities within their respective jurisdictions, including control of epidemics, anti-malaria and anti-filaria work, health education and supervision of all health centres. The District Medical Officer of School Health looks after the health of school children and takes up their medical examination and treatment whenever necessary.

As regards rural areas, medical facilities are provided through Health Centres, District Board and Union Board dispensaries (most of which have since been converted into Health Centres), Leprosy Clinics (in the endemic zones) and Rural Public Health Circles. Each of the Health Centres is under a Medical Officer who also supervises the Primary Health Centres under it. The other staff attached to a Health Centre are a Resident Medical Officer of Health, two Health Assistants, a compounder, two nurses, one trained dai, one health visitor, one public health nurse, eight G.D.A.s, one cook and three sweepers. A Rural Public Health Circle is staffed by a Sanitary Inspector, a Health Assistant, a Medicine Carrier, a permanent vaccinator and others. These Circles usually cover a police station each and the Sanitary Inspector in charge of the establishment looks after all health activities there including control of epidemics and prevention of food adulteration.

Registered medical practitioners

In 1964-65, the number of registered medical practitioners and specialists in the district was as follows.[1]

	General practitioners		Specialists	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
In Government service	35	76	45	nil
In private practice	68	136	4	nil
Total	103	212	49	nil

In the rural areas, P.S. Gangajalghati led the district with 11 Government doctors, followed by Kotulpur. Excepting Onda, all the police stations of Bankura had the same number or more of private practitioners than those in Government service. On an average each thana had eleven registered medical practitioners but the following ten police stations out of a total of nineteen in the district fell below this average : Taldangra, Raipur, Ranibandh, Mejia, Chhatna, Vishnupur, Onda, Simlapal, Saltora and Indas. Facilities for clinical diagnosis are available in Bankura town only.

Health Centres

As a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the Health Survey and Development Committee (Bhore Committee) of 1946, the district is now fairly well served both by hospitals and Health Centres. The initial idea was to have at least one Health

[1] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

Centre in every Union Board area with 10 or 4 indoor beds which were to be affiliated to the Thana Health Centre having preferably 50 beds or at least a minimum of 20 beds and affiliated to the Sub-divisional Health Centre-cum-Hospital. The scheme made some progress till 1955 when, at the instance of the Government of India, it was decided to have a Primary Health Centre with 10 beds and 2 or 3 Subsidiary Health Centres located at suitable places within each Development Block area. The Subsidiary Health Centres were to be in the nature of dispensaries only with no provision for indoor beds except for 2 non-dieted emergency beds. As a result of these divergent approaches, the district has now both these types of Health Centres. During the First Plan period, 6 Thana Health Centres (with 20 beds each), 6 Union Health Centres (with 10 beds each), one Union Health Centre (with 2 non-dieted maternity beds) and another Union Health Centre (with out-door section only) were established. More Health Centres came up during the Second and the Third Plan periods and some of the District Board's dispensaries, namely those at Gangajalghati and Nāidanga were converted into Subsidiary Health Centres.

Besides rendering diverse medical services which have been briefly described before, the Health Centres are supposed to stock and distribute, free of charge, medicines like penicillin, anti-tubercular drugs, chloromycetin, diptheria and tetanus anti-toxin, anti-rabic vaccine and the like. Vitamin tablets, capsules etc. are also distributed to expectant mothers and children. All these centres supplement the activities of the State family welfare clinics as also of the family planning establishments. To cater to the needs of rural people special units are being attached to the Health Centres; one mobile eye unit, performing difficult eye operations in several neighbouring thanas is attached to the Barjora Health Centre.

Rural Public Health Circles

On the preventive side, there are 19 Rural Health Circles functioning in the district with which a number of mobile medical units is attached. The urban areas are, however, not overlooked. There is a Health Officer attached to the Bankura Municipality who is assisted by a Sanitary Inspector, two Health Assistants and two permanent Vaccinators. Vishnupur and Sonamukhi Municipalities employ a Sanitary Inspector each. The Sanitary Inspectors of the rural and municipal Health Circles also act as food and drug inspectors. They periodically collect for analysis samples of food and drugs from the open market and take legal steps on the report of the Public Health Analyst. They also compile vital statistics. Besides their normal duties relating to vaccination against small-pox and cholera, the personnel attached to Health Circles have rendered useful service in the fields of malaria and leprosy control. The Health Circles have also played an inaugural role in the dissemination of knowledge about communicable diseases.

Other medical facilities

A pilot project for surveying the incidence of leprosy in the district as also for extending the existing domiciliary treatment facilities was launched during the First Plan period at Sānbāndhā and Monoharpur, both in P.S. Bankura. The Gauripur Leprosy Colony, standing on extensive grounds six miles north-west of the district headquarters, had 530 indoor beds, including 30 beds for a pilot scheme, in 1964-65 against only 100 beds in 1950-51. Plans are now in hand to increase the number of beds of this hospital further. With arrangements for housing the male and the female patients in separate colonies, recreational facilities for all the inmates, adequate staff quarters, fully equipped laboratories and separate wards for infectious, non-infectious and virulent cases, ambulance and water-supply works, this hospital, excepting the one at Purulia, is the largest institution of its kind in West Bengal and one of the biggest in India. Under the integrated leprosy control scheme, a leprosy treatment unit has been attached to the Sonamukhi Health Centre with four sub-units under it. A small leprosy colony was also established at Ranibandh in February 1955. The few leprosy clinics previously run by the District Board have since been provincialized.

The health of colliery labourers, numbering about 1,200 in the district, is reported to be satisfactory. The State Government has been executing certain centrally sponsored schemes for the betterment of health of the backward classes in the Sadar subdivision. These include protected water-supply, sanitary housing, supply of costlier medicines beyond the reach of the average patients and maintenance of dispensaries in remote rural areas. The Ranibandh Leprosy Clinic, mentioned earlier, is being run mainly for the tribals of the area at an average annual expenditure of Rs. 2,500.[1]

Recently, a mobile dental unit with its operational base at the district headquarters, has started visiting the outlying areas to serve the rural people who are largely deprived of dental care. The ambulance service has also been strengthened and the two ambulances working under the Sadar and the Vishnupur hospitals are employed in carrying patients both from urban and rural areas. A unit for the treatment of venereal diseases and a chest clinic with 18 beds under a T.B. specialist have been set up in the Sadar hospital. Specialists like dentists, eye-surgeons and gynaecologists have also been posted there since the First Plan period. On the abolition of the local A.G. Hospital during the Second Plan period, the Vishnupur Subdivisional Hospital with 18 beds was elevated to a well-equipped hospital with

[1] From the health point of view, the Santals and the Bauris should better be excluded from the so-called backward classes. Writing in 1908, O'Malley had stated in the old Bankura District Gazetteer that "Santals and Bauris are said not to suffer from fever and other diseases as much as the better castes of Hindus, probably owing to the healthier lives they live, to their residence in the west of the district, and to their stronger diet which often consists of fowls and goats, and among Bauris of pigs." (Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 80).

58 beds and provided with three additional medical officers, including a lady doctor in charge of the maternity welfare and family planning units. The family planning centre of the Sadar Hospital is also under a lady doctor.

In 1964, there were altogether 1,704 indoor beds[1] in all the medical establishments of the district. Of these, 830 were in the various State-managed hospitals at Bankura town, Vishnupur and Gauripur, 325 in the three State-aided hospitals, 360 in the 45 Health Centres and 189 in the Subdivisional Hospitals at Sadar and Vishnupur. There is no private non-aided hospital, railway hospital, mental hospital or hospital run from local funds in the district.

During the First Plan period, Rs. 1,35,670 was spent on protected water-supply schemes and Rs. 20,652 on public health measures exclusively in the backward areas. During the Second Plan, the corresponding expenditures were Rs. 13,891 on medical services and Rs. 2,44,425 on water-supply schemes. The emphasis was on a regional balance rather than any preferential bias for the urban areas.

Medical activities of the Zilla Parishad

With the passing of the Zilla Parishads Act of 1964, a policy of co-ordination between the Government and the Zilla Parishad about enforcement of health measures came into existence. In 1965, the Bankura Zilla Parishad was running as many as 23 clinics and dispensaries, mostly in the rural areas. The public health staff under it are now available for supplementing the efforts of the rural Health Centres and there is thus a well-arranged health service functioning in the district today.

Besides the various medical establishments mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, there are two A. G. hospitals at Khatra and Simlapal with 10 beds each and a refugee camp hospital at Piardoba also with 10 beds. Summing up the diverse medical and public health activities in Bankura, it may be said that the totality of efforts since independence has materially improved the health map of the district.

PRIVATE MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS

Bryan's Leper Home & Edith Home

The oldest medical institution set up in the district through private initiative is the Bryan's Leper Home which is also called the Bankura Leprosy Home and Hospital. It was established in 1902 in the outskirts of Bankura town through the munificence of Mrs. Bryan, a lady resident in Brighton, England. whose name it perpetuates. O'Malley wrote: "The work commenced in 1901, and after six months there were several buildings ready for the lepers. For several weeks, no leper came to the asylum, as there was a strong prejudice in the minds of the people against an institution established by the missionaries; but when the ice was broken, the lepers came readily and at present (1907) there are 56 male lepers, 43 women and 7 children in the leper

[1] Health on the March (1948-64): West Bengal, published by the Directorate of Health Services, West Bengal. pp. 8-9.

asylum proper."[1] In 1964, the Home had 250 indoor beds as also an out-door department kept open on Mondays and Thursdays with an average attendance of 74 patients per week. Out-door patients are examined and given medicines free of charge and those of them that need hospitalization are admitted for treatment. Occasionally, patients are transferred to the Purulia Leprosy Home and Hospital for general surgery. Sometimes patients from Government clinics are temporarily lodged in the Home which also maintains a link with the Bankura Sammilani Medical College. The Home has an operation theatre and a physiotherapy department for treatment in wax therapy. An ambulance donated to the organization visits every week six mobile clinics at Mejia, Gangajalghati and Barjora police stations for attending to or transporting to the main hospital such patients as may require attention there. The Home also runs a rehabilitation programme by training cured patients in market-gardening, horticulture, poultry-farming, rope-making, tailoring, weaving and shoe-making which helps those ex-patients who cannot return to their own communities. The badly deformed are, however, kept in the Home after their recovery.

In 1904, the Edith Home was built by Mr. Jackson, an official of the Leper Mission, as a memorial to his child. This institution, from its inception, has been used as an asylum for the untainted children of lepers and functions as an auxiliary organization of the Bryan's Leper Home.[2] Children kept here are taught to read and write and the boys are trained in useful crafts.

Sāreṅgā Khristiya Sevā Niketan

The Methodist Church of Bankura runs the Khristiya Sevā Niketan hospital at Sāreṅgā but the exact date of its establishment is not known. There is a missionary doctor and two missionary sisters who train local boys and girls in nursing, compounding etc. The hospital is open to all and patients come from far and near. In the past, when communications were poor and patients could not conveniently come to the hospital, the resident doctor used to tour the countryside dispensing medicines and giving treatment and advice. The institution receives a Government grant every year.

Rāmakrishna Mission

The Bankura branch of the Rāmakrishna Mission runs several homoeopathic charitable dispensaries in the district—two within the Bankura municipality, one at Jayrāmbaṭi in P.S. Kotulpur, one at Rāmharipur in P.S. Gangajalghati and another at Vishnupur. The average number of patients receiving treatment and advice at the Bankura centre alone numbers nearly 60,000 per year.

Bankura Sammilani Medical College and Hospital

The Bankura Sammilani, a private organization mainly of residents of Bankura town, founded, in 1924, the Bankura Sammilani Medical School. According to a Government order issued in

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 84.

[2] ibid. pp. 84-85.

1947, it ceased to teach the L.M.F. course and a full-fledged Medical College was started here in 1951 with 50 students. It was affiliated to the Calcutta University for the first M.B.B.S. course in 1956 and the M.B.B.S. degree course in 1958. The institution received a grant of Rs. 5 lakhs in 1960 and Rs. 4 lakhs in 1961 from the Government of India. In 1961, when the institution was provincialized, it had a staff of more than 200 persons. The income and expenditure of the college during the last year of its private management amounted to Rs. 2,44,030 and Rs. 2,22,793 respectively and the corresponding figures for the hospital for the same period were Rs. 89,048 and Rs. 1,51,633 respectively.[1] In 1964, with the merging of the District Hospital Annexe (with 131 beds) with it, the number of beds in this institution rose to 344. There are two hostels attached to the college, one accommodating 156 male students and the other 9 female students. The institution has 17 departments in all and provides a limited scope for research work.

Other private institutions

From the five centres set up under the Bankura Welfare Extension Project (since defunct) have emerged certain voluntary private organizations which are carrying on the activities of the old centres. Four of these, namely Govindadhām Samāj Sevā Samity, Bākādaha Social Welfare Centre, Tāldāngrā Welfare Extension Project Committee and Siromanipur Bijoyā Sammilani are now engaged in maternity welfare and similar other social work.

Gandhi Smārak Nidhi

Voluntary social services rendered by the Gandhi Smārak Nidhi mainly include collective sanitation programmes. It runs a sub-centre at Jhāntipāhāri and service centres in Bankura town. The Gandhi Vichār Parishad, an ancillary organization, engages itself in the welfare of *harijans* (sweepers).

The Bhārat Sevāsram Sangha runs gymnasiums and homoeopathic charitable dispensaries at Madhupur, Ranibandh and Bankura town.

The Padmaja Naidu Ārogyābās was set up in 1964 by the Janakalyān Samabāya Samity on 108 acres of land near Nabajibanpur in P.S. Onda for the rehabilitation of cured lepers. Another such colony at Kalyānpur in P.S. Sonamukhi is run by a private organization.

There are two private nursing homes in Bankura town and one at Vishnupur.

Āyurvedic & *Unāni* establishments

There is no *Āyurvedic* or *Unāni* hospital in the district which, however, does not mean that the said systems of medicine are not appreciated by the people. According to the District Magistrate of Bankura, there were in 1965, 15 *Āyurvedic kavirājs* in the urban and 25 in the rural areas of the district. One *Unāni hākim* was known to be practising in the urban area. An unspecified number of homoeopathic doctors practises in the urban and rural areas but

[1] Source: District Magistrate, Bankura.

there is no hospital arrangement for patients seeking homoeopathic treatment.

RESEARCH CENTRES

It has been mentioned already that limited research facilities are available at the Bankura Sammilani Medical College. There is no other institution in the district for carrying on research either in medicine or in public health.

A centre for midwifery training of nurses has recently been set up in Bankura town and in 1965 the first batch of 31 nurses was taking their lessons there.

Institutions for dissemination of public health knowledge

Dissemination of knowledge on various aspects of public health forms one of the most important duties of the field-staff attached to the Health Centres. Lecture and demonstration parties are often taken out by them to educate the villagers on family planning, nutrition, personal hygiene, sanitation, prevention and control of communicable diseases etc.

Family planning

Familiarizing married people about the techniques of birth control and family planning has always been one of the basic duties of the Health Centres, both primary and subsidiary. Of late, such general efforts are being supplemented by the activities of institutions specialized in the field. Two family welfare clinics are now functioning at Bankura and Vishnupur. The former has a mobile wing entrusted with peripatetic duties. Since January 1965, a more intensive scheme has been taken up under which one primary and six subsidiary family welfare planning centres have been set up in each of the following Blocks: Barjora, Gangajalghati, Kotulpur, Patrasayer, Taldangra and Saltora. Family planning training camps are also organized from time to time and ten such camps were arranged during 1964-65 at various places in the district.

SANITATION

We have already discussed in a previous section the administrative set-up for maintaining sanitation in the urban and rural areas of the district and have mentioned the administrative processes needed in implementing the connected schemes.

Urban areas

It is a well-known fact that although India had developed an enlightened system of village self-government in the past, not much attention was customarily paid to corresponding problems of urban self-government. Indian cities, more often than not, were, therefore, appendages to a court or a temple or a colony of merchants. Many of the functions which were performed by the pre-industrial cities of Europe were also performed by Indian cities, but they never had the political and administrative autonomy of European towns and never created institutions representing the civic interests of their inhabitants.[1]

[1] Bert F. Hoselitz—'The role of urbanization in economic development: some international comparisons' in India's Urban Future, edited by Roy Turner.

It may be pointed out here that while the first part of this notion may have some applicability to the Bankura district, there is considerable doubt as to whether the Malla kings had failed to create institutions representing the civic interests of the inhabitants of Vishnupur, their capital city. From its ruins and present-day configurations, even a lay observer may correctly conclude that for ecological planning of Vishnupur town as a whole, some sort of local government must have been necessary. With the advent of colonialism, however, this urban centre, which at one time must have acted as a catalyst in introducing changes in rural areas, itself decayed.

Slum clearance

Many of the present ills of the urban areas of the district have resulted from a neglect of careful planning. For instance, housing and slum clearance, the two most pressing needs, have not been properly attended to in any of the municipalities of the district. The great paucity of suitable housing and a rapid growth of congested slums in the towns of Bankura and Vishnupur are so inter-related that the two cannot be considered in isolation. No concerted effort appears to have been made so far to tackle any of these problems.

Water-supply

A scheme for supply of filtered water in Bankura town was executed only in 1916. With increasing demand, the capacity of the water-works was extended in 1926 and 1941. Even then, the present supply can meet the requirements of an area of 9.1 sq. km. (3.5 sq. miles) only whereas the town occupies an area of 18.13 sq. km. (7 sq. miles). The source of supply is the neighbouring Dwarakeswar and Gandheswari rivers. Two tube-wells in the bed of the former and two infiltration galleries in the bed of the latter are employed for drawing the water. The capacity of the Gandheswari pump is 24,000 gallons per hour and that of the Dwarakeswar pumps 27,000 gallons per hour. The designed capacity of the water-works is 1,92,000 gallons per day. There is no tap water supply at Vishnupur. Instead, there are 29 tube-wells and 96 ring-wells, some of which were under construction in 1964. The total expenditure incurred by the Vishnupur Municipality up to 1964 on all its water-supply schemes amounted to Rs. 1,30,328. The Sonamukhi Municipality maintains only 40 tube-wells for water-supply purposes. It appears from a report of the Chairman of this municipality that in 1964-65 the expenditure on water-supply was only Rs. 287 against an overall municipal expenditure of Rs. 47,201 for the same year and that in 1951-52 the corresponding figures were Rs. 69 and Rs. 16,353 respectively.

Drainage and sewage works

The drainage and sewage works of the Bankura Municipality served an area of 0.21 sq. km. (0.08 sq. miles) and a population of 10,000 only in 1950. The town had an area of 18.13 sq. km. (7 sq. miles) and a population of 62,673 according to the 1961 Census. In 1965, there were 27.37 km. (17 miles) of pucka and 56.35 km. (35 miles) of catcha drains maintained by the municipality. The drainage systems

of the Vishnupur and Sonamukhi municipalities are most inadequate, all the sewers being open and on the roadsides.

All the three municipalities in the district undertake conservancy, sanitation and vaccination work. In 1951-52, the Bankura Municipality engaged 182 sweepers—52 for roads, 29 for drains, 97 for markets and slaughter houses, 2 for taking care of municipal buffaloes and 2 for the burning ghats. In 1964-65, the number of sweepers was 184 and the distribution of work amongst them was more or less the same as in 1951-52. The municipality daily disposes of about 1,500 gallons of night-soil and four truckloads of refuse in a trenching ground about 6.4 km. (4 miles) away from the town. These are allowed to compost there and are eventually used for manuring agricultural lands. In the Vishnupur Municipality, clearance of roads, drains and service privies is done by hand-barrows, buffalo carts and a tractor with trailers. The Sonamukhi Municipality follows the same practice except for the fact that it does not possess any mechanical contrivance. It is apparent that none of the municipalities has sufficient funds to improve upon its present conservancy arrangements significantly.

The bazaars run by the three municipalities where large quantities of food-stuff are bought and sold every day, are generally filthy and are sources of dirt and disease in the neighbourhood. They are congested and unclean and their drains are choked with garbage.

Rural areas

Water-supply

Supply of drinking water, particularly in the arid countryside of Bankura, is a fairly serious problem. The Directorate of Public Health Engineering is now engaged in sinking tube-wells and constructing masonry wells, priority being given to those areas where scarcity of potable water is acute. Normally, local contributions are expected for implementing such schemes but the Advisory Committee for Rural Water-supply functioning in the district has the authority to waive such contributions from specially poor areas. The Tribal Welfare Department is also engaged in sinking tube-wells and they sunk 97 and 211 tube-wells in the Ādivāsi zones of the district during the First and the Second Plan periods respectively. Under a scheme sponsored by the Union Government for the upliftment of backward classes, 76 wells were sunk by 1961 in certain areas of the Sadar subdivision predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Taking all these agencies into consideration, the total number of tube-wells sunk in the district by 1961 (up to which year figures are available) aggregated to 23 in Indas, 32 in Barjora, 225 in Sonamukhi and 123 in Kotulpur police stations. 19 tanks and 46 wells in Ranibandh police station and 50 wells in Gangajalghati police station were also re-excavated.

Sanitation

An attempt is also being made to improve rural sanitation by providing bore-hole latrines and soak-pits. According to the latest figures available, there were in 1960-61, 37 such latrines and 2 soak-pits in Indas police station and 868 latrines and 86 soak-pits in

Sonamukhi police station. The District Magistrate of Bankura reported that the scheme was also tried in Onda police station where "bore-hole latrines proved a complete failure."

Under the supervision and guidance of the Tribal Welfare Department, improved housing schemes for Scheduled Tribes have been implemented in Khatra and Ranibandh thanas. Such schemes have also benefited Scheduled Caste people in Chhatna and Gangajalghati police stations. It may be noted that the results achieved so far in improving sanitation in the rural areas have not been encouraging enough inasmuch as the connected efforts did not have any statutory sanction behind them but had to be translated into practice mostly through persuasion.

CHAPTER XV

PUBLIC LIFE AND SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

REPRESENTATION OF THE DISTRICT IN THE STATE AND UNION LEGISLATURES (VIDHAN SABHA, VIDHAN PARISHAD AND LOK SABHA)

At the time of the General Elections in 1962, the district had 13 Vidhān Sabhā (Legislative Assembly) constituencies, namely Indpur, Ranibandh, Raipur, Taldangra, Onda, Vishnupur, Kotulpur, Patrasayer, Barjora, Gangajalghati, Bankura, Chhatna and Saltora. The Indpur, Vishnupur, Patrasayer and Gangajalghati constituencies were reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates and those of Ranibandh and Chhatna were reserved for Scheduled Tribe candidates.

Lok Sabhā

For the purpose of elections to the Lok Sabhā (House of the People), the district formed part of three Lok Sabha constituencies none of which was entirely confined within the boundaries of the district. The Bankura Lok Sabha constituency consisted of the Gangajalghati, Bankura, Chhatna and Saltora Vidhan Sabha constituencies together with the Pārā, Raghunāthpur and Kāshipur Vidhan Sabha constituencies falling within the adjoining district of Purulia. The Vishnupur Lok Sabha constituency covered Indpur, Ranibandh, Raipur, Taldangra, Onda and Vishnupur Vidhan Sabha constituencies along with one Vidhan Sabha constituency of the Purulia district, Hurā. The third Lok Sabha constituency was Āusgrām (in Burdwan district) composed of four Vidhan Sabha constituencies of the Burdwan district (Āusgrām, Bhātār, Galsi and Khandaghosh) and three Vidhan Sabha constituencies of the Bankura district, namely Kotulpur, Patrasayer and Barjora. The Vishnupur and Āusgrām constituencies were reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates.

Vidhān Parishad

In accordance with the Delimitation of Council Constituencies (West Bengal) Order, 1951, as amended by the Delimitation of Council Constituencies (West Bengal) Amendment Order, 1961, the local authorities of Bankura district formed a Vidhān Parishad (Legislative Council) constituency while the district as a whole was included within the West Bengal South-west Graduates' Constituency along with Birbhum, Bankura, Purulia, Midnapur and Hooghly districts and within the West Bengal Teachers' Constituency which included four other districts—Birbhum, Burdwan, Purulia and Midnapur.

Political parties: their hold on the district at different times and as reflected in the elections

Besides the four General Elections in 1952, 1957, 1962 and 1967, two by-elections in respect of Vidhan Sabha representation were held in the district due to reasons recorded later in this chapter.

In the First General Elections held in 1952, the district had provision for electing 14 representatives from 9 Vidhan Sabha constituencies,

5 of them being double-membered. Of the 14 representatives elected during the First General Elections, 10 belonged to the Indian National Congress, 3 were of the Hindu Mahāsabhā and the other was an independent candidate. The successful Congress candidates polled 35.43% of the total valid votes in Barjora, 29.09% in Taldangra, 43.81% in Gangajalghati, 20.10% in Vishnupur (General), 23.21% in Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste), 20.31% in Sonamukhi (General), 20.33% in Sonamukhi (Scheduled Caste), 16.53% in Chhatna (Scheduled Tribe), 19.69% in Khatra (Scheduled Caste) and 14.85% in Raipur (General) constituencies. The Hindu Mahāsabhā candidates were returned from Bankura, Chhatna and Khatra constituencies polling 43.94% of the total valid votes in Bankura, 21.78% in Chhatna (General) and 18.61% in Khatra (General) constituencies. In the Bankura constituency the nearest rival of the Mahāsabhā candidate belonged to the Communist Party of India and polled 27.71% of the valid votes while the Congress candidate came in third with 26.54% of the votes.

First General Elections, 1952

It is apparent from the results of the First General Elections that the Indian National Congress dominated the political life of the district at that time and that the next important political party was the Hindu Mahāsabhā. Although defeated in the Chhatna (General) and Khatra (General) constituencies, the Congress candidates secured 19.58% and 14.40% of the valid votes in those two constituencies respectively which were fairly close to those polled by the winning Mahāsabhā candidates. It was curious that while at Bankura, a predominantly urban constituency, the Hindu Mahāsabhā won the contest, it suffered a bad reverse in the other urban constituency at Vishnupur where the Hindu Mahāsabhā candidate got 11.82% of the votes trailing far behind the Congress candidate who polled 20.10%. In the Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) constituency the Hindu Mahāsabhā contestant came in third. Two other all-India parties which participated in the First General Elections were the Communist Party of India and the Jana Sangh. Although none of their candidates came out successful, both influenced the elections appreciably inasmuch as the marginal votes that they took away from the other parties decided, in certain cases, the fate of the principal contestants. In the Barjora and Gangajalghati constituencies the Jana Sangh came out a close second to the winning Congress candidates. In the Gangajalghati constituency the Jana Sangh polled 28.12% as against 43.81% of the total valid votes secured by the Congress candidate. In the Taldangra constituency, again, the Jana Sangh candidate polled 24.61% of the votes as against 29.09% collected by the winning Congress candidate. The C.P.I. candidates came in second in Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) and Barjora constituencies. In Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) constituency, the C.P.I. candidate polled 14.17% and in Barjora

28.43% of the votes as against 23.2% and 35.43% respectively obtained by the winning Congress candidates. But in Chhatna (General) and Raipur (Scheduled Caste) constituencies their position was pretty low with poll figures at 6.58% and 6.0% respectively. Certain other political parties like the Krishak Mazdoor Prajā Party, the Forward Bloc and the Socialist Party also set up candidates who hardly influenced the electorate.

Lok Sabha

In the Bankura Lok Sabha constituency, which included the whole of the district and was a double-membered constituency, the Congress candidates won both the seats securing 16.36% of the total valid votes in the general seat and 14.47% in the seat reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates. The Hindu Mahāsabhā came out second best in the reserved seat with a poll figure of 13.54%.

Second General Elections, 1957

During the Second General Elections held in 1957, Bankura returned 13 representatives from 7 Vidhan Sabha constituencies of which 6 were double-membered. In these elections the district unequivocally expressed its favour for the Indian National Congress and elected all the 13 candidates from that party, the other parties suffering a general decline in their influence over the Bankura populace. The most remarkable set-back was suffered by the Hindu Mahāsabhā, which lost ground considerably. But the Communist Party of India although failing to score victory in any of the constituencies, registered a relative rise in popularity. The candidates running on Congress tickets polled more votes than all their rivals put together in six constituencies—Bankura, Chhatna, Onda, Vishnupur, Patrasayer and Kotulpur. In the Raipur constituency polling was sharply divided among 15 contestants and Congress candidates won both the seats—general and reserved—although not by an absolute majority of votes. The polling percentages of the Congress candidates were: Bankura (General) 19.4%, Bankura (Scheduled Caste) 23.4%, Chhatna (General) 30.87%, Chhatna (Scheduled Tribe) 26.09%, Onda (General) 19.20%, Onda (Scheduled Caste) 22.96%, Raipur (Scheduled Tribe) 14.23%, Vishnupur (General) 26%, Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) 27%, Patrasayer (General) 26%, Patrasayer (Scheduled Caste) 26.60% and Kotulpur 79.17%.

The Hindu Mahāsabhā candidates fought well in Bankura, Chhatna, Onda and Vishnupur constituencies and secured 15.40% of the votes in Bankura (General), 15% in Bankura (Scheduled Caste), 16.10% in Chhatna (General), 12.5% in Onda (General), 12.87% in Onda (Scheduled Caste) and 12% in Vishnupur (General) constituencies. In all these constituencies the Hindu Mahāsabhā candidates came out as the second best. In the Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) constituency, the Mahāsabhā candidate polled only 10% of the total valid votes.

The Communist Party of India did well in the Patrasayer consti-

tuency coming out second and securing 24% of the votes in the General seat and 17% in the Scheduled Caste seat as against 26% secured by Congress candidates in both the seats. In the Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) constituency as well, the C.P.I. candidate was the second best capturing 12% of the votes. But in the Raipur (Scheduled Tribe) constituency, the C.P.I. recorded its lowest polling with only 3 8% of the votes.

The other party which made some mark during these elections, was the Prajā Socialist Party. Candidates sponsored by it collected 11% of the total votes in Vishnupur (General) constituency and 7.28% in Raipur (General) constituency.

Lok Sabha

In the Second General Elections the Bankura district formed parts of two Lok Sabha constituencies—Bankura and Asansol. The Bankura Lok Sabha constituency consisted of the entire Sadar subdivision (excluding P.S. Barjora), Vishnupur and Joypur police stations of this district and five police stations of the adjoining Purulia district, namely Pārā, Raghunāthpur, Neturia, Santuri and Kāshipur. In addition, villages bearing J.L. numbers 594 to 652 in Punchā police station of the Purulia district were also included in this constituency. The Asansol Lok Sabha constituency included the whole of Vishnupur subdivision (excluding Vishnupur and Joypur police stations) and P.S. Barjora of the Bankura district and Āusgrām, Bhātār, Galsi, Khandaghosh police stations and Unions No. 1 to 3, 5 and 8 in the Burdwan police station of the Burdwan district. Both the constituencies were double-membered. The Indian National Congress captured 24.78% of the votes in Bankura (General), 25.05% in Bankura (Scheduled Caste), 26.00% in Asansol (General) and 29.60% in Asansol (Scheduled Caste) constituencies. In the Bankura constituency, the Hindu Mahāsabhā candidates came in second securing 10.72% in the General and 13.55% in the Scheduled Caste seats. In the Asansol constituency, the Congress candidates were opposed by independent candidates.

Vidhan Sabha by-election, 1958

In 1958, a by-election was held in respect of the Chhatna Vidhan Sabha constituency to fill up the vacancy caused by the death of the sitting Congress member which was fought between a Congress and an independent candidate. The Indian National Congress recorded a convincing victory here by securing 70.85% of the total votes.

Third General Elections, 1962

It has already been mentioned that during the Third General Elections held in 1962 the district had 13 representatives to send to the Vidhan Sabha. Of these, 4 seats were reserved for Scheduled Caste and 2 for Scheduled Tribe candidates. The results of these elections registered a further change in the composition and character of the district's representation to the Vidhan Sabha inasmuch as 9 candidates were returned by the Congress and 4 by the C.P.I. The constituencies from which the candidates of the Indian National

follows: Taldangra (57.35%), Ranibandh (52.11%), Indpur (55.36%), Chhatna (49.48%), Barjora (46.38%), Bankura (30.86%), Onda (45.15%), Vishnupur (49.35%) and Sonamukhi (47.68%). The emergence of the Bāṅglā Congress as a redoubtable rival of the Indian National Congress was borne out by the fact that in its *debut* into the political arena of the district it won no less than four seats—Raipur, Gangajalghati, Kotulpur and Indas—with 51.48%, 56.55%, 46.59% and 68.66% respectively of the polls in its favour while the Congress candidates could secure no more than 42.16%, 43.45%, 44.57% and 31.34% of the valid votes cast in the respective constituencies. Another important event worthy of notice was the complete ousting of both wings of the Communist Party from the district's representation to the Vidhan Sabha. The Ranibandh, Barjora, Bankura and Vishnupur seats captured by the C.P.I. during the Third General Elections went this time to the Congress. C.P.M. candidates contesting from Taldangra, Ranibandh, Barjora, Vishnupur, Kotulpur and Sonamukhi constituencies polled 42.65%, 23.08%, 42.97%, 10.82%, 6.81% and 28.62% of the valid votes respectively while the C.P.I. nominees fighting only for the Bankura and Vishnupur seats secured 30.82% and 12.64% of the valid votes. The Jana Sangh's poor performance is reflected in the fact that it collected only 6.36%, 4.70%, 9.34%, 10.64% and 2.42% of the votes in Raipur, Ranibandh, Indpur, Barjora and Vishnupur constituencies where it had set up candidates. While the S.S.P. nominee contesting the Chhatna seat emerged as the second best with 33.80% of the valid votes to his credit, the party fared miserably in Indpur and Bankura where its polling percentages were only 4.74 and 3.38. The P.S.P. put up a lone candidate at Onda who left the field with

Political trends as reflected in elections

in 1967, yet the former was no mean a rival to the Congress in Taldangra, Ranibandh, Barjora and Sonamukhi and the latter in Bankura. Both of them, however, failed miserably in Vishnupur. With the debacle of the C.P.I. and the C.P.M. in 1967, a new challenge to the Congress came successfully from the Bāṅglā Congress which wrested 4 seats from the former's fold. Although the Congress retained the same number of Vidhan Sabha seats in 1962 and 1967, its performance in the parliamentary elections of 1967 was somewhat bewildering. While the Vishnupur parliamentary seat went to the Congress, Bankura sided with the C.P.I. and Āusgrām with C.P.M. The Bankura seat won by the C.P.I. by a margin of about 30,000 votes in the face of Congress's bagging 5 of the 7 Vidhan Sabha seats composing this constituency reflected the mixed preference of the electors, while the Āusgrām seat captured by the C.P.M. presented a clearer picture as 5 of the 7 Vidhan Sabha seats comprising it opted for non-Congress parties. The Jana Sangh, like the Hindu Mahāsabhā, seems to have hardly influenced the electorate in 1967.

VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

The mind of a community manifests itself through various voluntary organizations on the economic, political, social, religious and cultural planes. A study of the more important of such institutions in Bankura district is worthwhile for assessing the intellectual predilections of the people.

Chronologically, the British Christian missionaries may perhaps be called the pioneers in establishing the earliest social service institutions in the district. The first of them was Rev. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society who resided in Burdwan and used to pay occasional visits to Bankura town as far back as in 1840. Although he never lived with the people of Bankura, he established some missions and schools in the district, the most [illegible] of which was founded in 1846 and has now become the [illegible] Zilla School.

The Methodist Missionary Society

[illegible] Methodist Missionary Society (formerly known as the [illegible] Mission) began its work in Bankura in 1870 mainly in the [illegible] of education. In 1870 Rev. John Richards started an M.E. [illegible] at Kuchkuchiā, a locality of Bankura town, and in 1889 [illegible] opened its High school wing. The M.E. school was [illegible] but the High school continued to flourish and became [illegible] In 1877 Rev. Broadhead founded the present Girls' [illegible] which has served its purpose well. At a later date, [illegible] had already taken roots in the town, a great [illegible] college and the Society founded one in [illegible] Bankura Christian College today. [illegible] Missionary [illegible] runs this large college, a Multi-purpose school, a Middle Vernacular

Congress were returned and their respective polling percentages were as follows: Indpur (47.20%), Raipur (46.49%), Taldangra (55.94%), Onda (52.82%), Kotulpur (79.18%), Patrasayer (Scheduled Caste) (57.18%), Gangajalghati (Scheduled Caste) (50.06%), Chhatna (Scheduled Tribe) (56.52%) and Saltora (60.97%). The returns show that Congress candidates scored absolute majority in Taldangra, Onda, Kotulpur, Patrasayer (Scheduled Caste), Gangajalghati (Scheduled Caste), Chhatna (Scheduled Tribe) and Saltora constituencies. The successful candidates from the Communist Party of India were returned from the Bankura, Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste), Barjora and Ranibandh (Scheduled Tribe) constituencies polling respectively 34.90%, 45.47%, 52.66% and 54.66% of the valid votes. It would appear that the successful Communist candidates came mostly from constituencies having an urban character. The Bankura and Vishnupur constituencies included the respective municipalities while the Barjora constituency comprised the Sonamukhi municipal area and was situated close to highly industrialized areas like Durgapur and Asansol in Burdwan district. The Congress candidates in these four constituencies, however, trailed closely behind the winning C.P.I. candidates by securing 33.23% of the total valid votes in Bankura, 44.84% in Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) and 35.14% in Barjora constituencies. On the other hand, the Communist candidates from Taldangra, Patrasayer and Saltora came out as seconds to their Congress rivals by securing 35.26%, 42.82% and 27.71% of the votes respectively.

These elections registered a further deterioration in the position of the Hindu Mahāsabhā which could muster some strength only in three constituencies. In Gangajalghati, the Hindu Mahāsabhā candidate nearly caught up with the winning Congress candidate and lost by a slender margin of only 30 votes. In Indpur (Scheduled Caste) and Onda constituencies also the Hindu Mahāsabhā polled 38.38% and 29.61% of the votes respectively and were the strongest rivals of the winning Congress candidates. In the Bankura Constituency, the Hindu Mahāsabhā secured 31.86% of the votes and took the third place but in the Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste), Kotulpur and Taldangra constituencies it fared badly.

Lok Sabha

In the Lok Sabha elections during 1962 the district formed parts of 3 parlimentary constituencies, Bankura, Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) and Āusgrām (Scheduled Caste), the respective areas of which have already been described. From all of them Congress candidates were returned polling 51.13% in Bankura, 52.94% in Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) and 51.17% in Āusgrām constituencies. The P.S.P. candidate in the Bankura constituency put up a plucky fight to emerge as the second best candidate with 32.34% of the votes cast in his favour. In the other 2 constituencies, the second places

went to C.P.I. candidates who polled 40.61% of the votes in Ausgrām and 27.51% of the votes in Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) constituencies.

Vidhan Sabha by-election, 1962

Following the resignation of the sitting member from the Saltora Vidhan Sabha constituency, a by-election was held in April 1962. The Indian National Congress repeated its previous victory by securing 74.20% of the votes as against 22.26% polled by its nearest rival, the C.P.I.

Fourth General Elections, 1967

In the Fourth General Elections held in February 1967, the district was parcelled out between three Lok Sabha constituencies, namely Bankura (General), Vishnupur (Scheduled Caste) and Āusgrām (Scheduled Caste), of which the Vishnupur constituency consisting of the Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Taldangra, Raipur, Ranibandh, Indpur, Vishnupur, Kotulpur and Indas was entirely contained within this district, while the Bankura constituency was shared by this district and the adjoining district of Purulia and comprised the Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Chhatna, Bankura and Onda of the former and those of Pārā, Raghunāthpur, Kāshipur and Hurā of the latter. Likewise, the Āusgrām constituency was composed of the Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Gangajalghati, Barjora and Sonamukhi of this district, besides those of Durgapur, Faridpur, Āusgrām and Galsi of the district of Burdwan. The Indian National Congress could capture only the reserved Vishnupur seat and came out as the second best in the remaining constituencies of Bankura and Āusgrām, the former going to the Communist Party of India and the latter to the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In terms of percentages of valid votes polled, the Congress secured 49.12% in Vishnupur, 35.04% in Bankura and 48.51% in Āusgrām while the victorious nominees of the C.P.I. and C.P.M. polled 46.53% in Bankura and 51.49% in Āusgrām respectively. The Jana Sangh, which had put up candidates in the Bankura and Vishnupur constituencies, cut a sorry figure by mustering only 6.26% and 3.65% of the valid votes, while the C.P.M., which had set up a candidate in the latter constituency, polled only 11.77% of the votes thereby occupying the third position, next to the Bāṅglā Congress representative who polled 35.45%.

Vidhan Sabha

The 13 Vidhan Sabha constituencies in the district were: Taldangra, Raipur (Scheduled Tribe), Ranibandh (Scheduled Tribe), Indpur (Scheduled Caste), Chhatna, Gangajalghati (Scheduled Caste), Barjora, Bankura, Onda, Vishnupur, Kotulpur, Indas (Scheduled Caste) and Sonamukhi (Scheduled Caste). The Congress hold on the district remained unimpaired with the same number of seats, namely nine, to its credit while it trailed immediately behind the victorious candidates, who belonged this time to the Bāṅglā Congress, in the four other constituencies. The seats captured by the Congress together with the percentages of votes polled were as

follows: Taldangra (57.35%), Ranibandh (52.11%), Indpur (55.36%), Chhatna (49.48%), Barjora (46.38%), Bankura (30.86%), Onda (45.15%), Vishnupur (49.35%) and Sonamukhi (47.68%). The emergence of the Bāṅglā Congress as a redoubtable rival of the Indian National Congress was borne out by the fact that in its *debut* into the political arena of the district it won no less than four seats—Raipur, Gangajalghati, Kotulpur and Indas—with 51.48%, 56.55%, 46.59% and 68.66% respectively of the polls in its favour while the Congress candidates could secure no more than 42.16%, 43.45%, 44.57% and 31.34% of the valid votes cast in the respective constituencies. Another important event worthy of notice was the complete ousting of both wings of the Communist Party from the district's representation to the Vidhan Sabha. The Ranibandh, Barjora, Bankura and Vishnupur seats captured by the C.P.I. during the Third General Elections went this time to the Congress. C.P.M. candidates contesting from Taldangra, Ranibandh, Barjora, Vishnupur, Kotulpur and Sonamukhi constituencies polled 42.65%, 23.08%, 42.97%, 10.82%, 6.81% and 28.62% of the valid votes respectively while the C.P.I. nominees fighting only for the Bankura and Vishnupur seats secured 30.82% and 12.64% of the valid votes. The Jana Sangh's poor performance is reflected in the fact that it collected only 6.36%, 4.70%, 9.34%, 10.64% and 2.42% of the votes in Raipur, Ranibandh, Indpur, Barjora and Vishnupur constituencies where it had set up candidates. While the S.S.P. nominee contesting the Chhatna seat emerged as the second best with 33.80% of the valid votes to his credit, the party fared miserably in Indpur and Bankura where its polling percentages were only 4.74 and 3.38. The P.S.P. put up a lone candidate at Onda who left the field with a meagre 2.63% of the valid votes.

Political trends as reflected in the elections

It is more than apparent that, over the years, except for the ephemeral rise of the Hindu Mahāsabhā and the Communist Party of India, there has been no major shift in the district's political affiliation. The Indian National Congress, which has all along won the majority of Vidhan Sabha seats from the district, was successfully challenged by the Hindu Mahāsabhā in 3 constituencies in 1952. With the latter's exit from the district's political arena since 1957—its decline being eloquently manifest in the erosion of supporting votes from 1,09,278 in 1957 to only 48,742 in 1962—the vacuum came to be filled by the Congress during the Second General Elections. The C.P.I., which had run the second best candidates in the Bankura, Barjora and Vishnupur constituencies in 1952 made further headway in 1962 when it won the said seats along with a predominantly rural one—Ranibandh. This was significant inasmuch as the previous Raipur constituency, which had included the Ranibandh constituency of the 1962 elections, was behind the Congress in 1952 and 1957. Though all these constituencies failed both the C.P.M. and C.P.I.

in 1967, yet the former was no mean a rival to the Congress in Taldangra, Ranibandh, Barjora and Sonamukhi and the latter in Bankura. Both of them, however, failed miserably in Vishnupur. With the debacle of the C.P.I. and the C.P.M. in 1967, a new challenge to the Congress came successfully from the Bāṅglā Congress which wrested 4 seats from the former's fold. Although the Congress retained the same number of Vidhan Sabha seats in 1962 and 1967, its performance in the parliamentary elections of 1967 was somewhat bewildering. While the Vishnupur parliamentary seat went to the Congress, Bankura sided with the C.P.I. and Āusgrām with C.P.M. The Bankura seat won by the C.P.I. by a margin of about 30,000 votes in the face of Congress's bagging 5 of the 7 Vidhan Sabha seats composing this constituency reflected the mixed preference of the electors, while the Āusgrām seat captured by the C.P.M. presented a clearer picture as 5 of the 7 Vidhan Sabha seats comprising it opted for non-Congress parties. The Jana Sangh, like the Hindu Mahāsabhā, seems to have hardly influenced the electorate in 1967.

VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

The mind of a community manifests itself through various voluntary organizations on the economic, political, social, religious and cultural planes. A study of the more important of such institutions in Bankura district is worthwhile for assessing the intellectual predilections of the people.

Chronologically, the British Christian missionaries may perhaps be called the pioneers in establishing the earliest social service institutions in the district. The first of them was Rev. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society who resided in Burdwan and used to pay occasional visits to Bankura town as far back as in 1840. Although he never lived with the people of Bankura, he established some missions and schools in the district, the most notable of which was founded in 1846 and has now become the Bankura Zilla School.

The Methodist Missionary Society

The Methodist Missionary Society (formerly known as the Wesleyan Mission) began its work in Bankura in 1870 mainly in the field of education. In 1870 Rev. John Richards started an M.E. school at Kuchkuchiā, a locality of Bankura town, and in 1889 Rev. Spink opened its High school wing. The M.E. school was later abolished but the High school continued to flourish and became very popular. In 1877 Rev. Broadhead founded the present Girls' Training School which has served its purpose well. At a later date, when primary education had already taken roots in the town, a great need was felt for a local college and the Society founded one in 1903 which has grown into the Bankura Christian College today. The Methodist Missionary Society now runs this large college, a Higher Secondary Multi-purpose school, a Middle Vernacular

school, a Girls' Training school and three Primary girls' schools at the district headquarters.

Away from Bankura town, the Society has also set up a number of schools, big and small, at various places like Onda, Vishnupur, Mejia, Chhatna and Sāreṅgā. The Mejia Middle English School and the Chhatna Middle English School have since been taken over by local managing committees which are running them privately. The Vishnupur Mission High School, which has recently been upgraded from the status of a Junior High school, is still maintained by the Society. In the Sāreṅgā area, the Society is maintaining schools at Gādrā, Khoierpāhāri, Gobindapur, Kuldihā, Telijānt, Kuchhliājhāṭi and Sāreṅgā. These institutions are now being gradually taken over by the State Government for official management. The institutions still run by the Society at Sāreṅgā include a Senior Basic school, a Junior Basic school and a Junior Basic training college. Although these institutions are financed by the State Government, they are administered by a committee appointed by the Methodist Church. In areas around Rāipur, Rādhā (near Phulkusmā), Samādi, Palāsbani and Bāgdubi, the Methodist Missionary Society has so far founded as many as 50 schools and are still maintaining them.

Another objective of the Society was to fight leprosy, widely prevalent in the district, for which it opened negotiations in 1901 with the Mission to Lepers in India and the East, resulting in the establishment of the Bankura Leprosy Home and Hospital in 1902 at Junebediā in the outskirts of Bankura town. The Society still manages this institution although the entire cost of maintenance is borne by the Mission to Lepers. The hospital has two wings—indoor and outdoor. Some 200 patients get regular treatment in the indoor department while the outdoor clinic is open on Mondays and Thursdays and is attended by about 74 patients per week. To convert the lepers into useful and earning citizens, a training programme has been taken up for the indoor patients under which they receive training in useful skills like weaving, rope-making, dairy-farming, poultry and shoe-making. Such training visualizes future rehabilitation of the patients when they are cured. A mobile clinic attached to this hospital pays weekly visits to six leprosy centres in Mejia, Gangajalghati and Barjora police stations. The Society also runs a general hospital at Sāreṅgā.

Rāmakrishna Maṭh & Mission

The Rāmakrishna Maṭh and Mission started functioning in Bankura town in 1917. It maintains a charitable homoeopathic dispensary, a Junior Basic school and a fairly big library in the town. It also runs a Higher Secondary Multi-purpose school and another charitable homoeopathic dispensary at Rāmharipur in P. S. Gangajalghati. At Jayrāmbāṭi[1] in P. S. Kotulpur the Mission maintains a

[1] See entry 'Jayrāmbāṭi' in Chapter XVI.

Junior High school, a charitable dispensary and a commodious guest house.

Amarkānan Āsram

The history and activities of the Amarkānan Āsram have been dealt with in Chapter XVI.[1]

Bhārat Scouts and Guides

The scouting movement started in the district in 1928. Formerly, Bankura was divided into two scouting districts—Bankura and Vishnupur. At present the Vishnupur scouting district of the Bhārat Scouts and Guides organization functions for both the units under one District Commissioner. There are 5 troupes, 3 in Vishnupur and 2 in Bankura town.

Indian Red Cross Society

The Bankura branch of the Indian Red Cross Society started functioning in 1937. It works as a distributing agency of the Indian Red Cross during natural calamities, epidemics and the like.

Bhārat Sevāsram Saṅgha

The Bhārat Sevāsram Saṅgha opened a branch in Bankura in 1946. It maintains a free Primary school with about 125 pupils on its rolls, a free gymnasium with about 35 trainees and a library-cum-reading room, all situated within the Saṅgha's premises at Kenduādihi in Bankura town. Another branch of the Saṅgha, set up at Ranibandh to work amongst backward and tribal people, maintains a home for students where 17 Santal boys are provided with free boarding, lodging, clothing and books. The Saṅgha also runs 4 night schools at Barkānāli, Kotro, Bethuālā and Rānibāndh. The State Government has been giving financial assistance to the Saṅgha in their training programmes for the Scheduled Tribes which include spinning, basket-making, rope-making and such other skills. The Saṅgha is keen on organizing a youth movement with a religious bias and has set up about 20 Hindu *Milan Mandirs* at different places in the district.

Taldangra Thana Anunnata Hindu Unnayan Samiti

The Taldangra Thana Anunnata Hindu Unnayan Samiti was formed in 1948 mainly by the Khairas of Barakāntā village in P.S. Taldangra. The purpose of the organization is apparent from its name and its activities are mainly confined amongst the Hindu depressed classes in Taldangra, Simalapal, Onda and Vishnupur police stations. It has bored about 30 auto-flow tube-wells in the Silābati and Jaypāndā river basins for improvement of local agriculture. Another wing of the Samiti has organized several schools for illiterate adults. The State Government helps the institution but it was reportedly in a moribund condition early in 1966 when the Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of West Bengal was trying to revitalize it.

The Gandhi Smārak Nidhi

The Gandhi Smārak Nidhi, an institution wedded to the ideals of Gandhian Sarvodaya, started functioning in the district in 1954. It organized a *grām paribār* (lit. a village family) based on economic self-sufficiency and social cohesion at Neropāhāri, a village in

[1] See entry 'Amarkānan' in Chapter XVI.

P.S. Saltora. Working in collaboration with the Kasturbā Gandhi Trust, the Nidhi also established a centre in P.S. Simlapal in 1954 and brought together a few Santal hamlets to form another family of villages which was named 'Gandhi Grām'. The most notable achievement of the institution has been the moral transformation it brought about among a group of habitual criminals belonging to the Khaira community and inhabiting the village of Krishnapur in P.S. Simalapal. A few years' work among them according to Gandhian ideals changed the villagers' habits to such an extent that the local police outpost was considered superfluous and the villagers took upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the neighbourhood. The village was donated to Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the Sarvodaya leader, when he visited the area and the inhabitants joined hands to pool together and distribute amongst themselves all the village lands according to the membership of the various families, keeping apart about 100 *bighās* for co-operative farming.

The example set by Krishnapur inspired the people of neighbouring villages who met in a convention at Duhiādohā in September 1961 and decided to offer 100 acres of land to the Gandhi Smārak Nidhi on which the Gandhi Smārak Sikshā Niketan was eventually established. With assistance from the State Government, the Sikshā Niketan is reported to have reclaimed 500 acres of land for joint-farming, pisciculture etc.

The Nidhi also runs several adult education centres and imparts vocational training to students in collaboration with the Khādi and Village Industries Commission and the Bhārat Sevak Samāj.

The Gandhi Vichār Parishad, a subsidiary body of the Gandhi Smārak Nidhi, engages itself in propagating Gandhian ideals among urban people for which it organizes occasional lectures and symposia in its premises in Bankura town. The Parishad runs a *sevā-kendra* (service centre), a Primary school, a Mahilā Samiti (women's association) and a public creche in the sweepers' colony at Kuchkuchiā within Bankura town.

The Rāmakrishna Āsram, Vishnupur

The Rāmakrishna Āsram of Vishnupur, an organization independent of the Rāmakrishna Mission and Maṭh, came into existence in 1955. It has founded a students' home, a free Primary school, a library and a guest house at Vishnupur. It also runs a charitable homoeopathic dispensary where many people receive treatment.

Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad, Vishnupur

Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad, the well-known literary and cultural institution of Bengal, opened a branch at Vishnupur in 1951 with a view to collecting and preserving old manuscripts, coins, sculptures, art objects etc. related to the rich cultural heritage of the Rāḍh region in general and of Bankura in particular. Thanks to the untiring efforts of a band of devoted workers, the organization has

now in its archives several thousand old books, manuscripts and documents of inestimable value besides a large numismatic collection, numerous art objects, sculptures and the like preserved in its museum wing called the Āchārya Jogesh Chandra Purākriti Bhavan, named after that illustrious savant of Bankura.[1]

Vishnupur Mahilā Samiti

The women belonging to the families of traditional craftsmen of Vishnupur organized themselves into an association in 1957 to train female apprentices for various hereditary callings. It may be mentioned here that most women members of the artisans' families of Vishnupur actively participate in the professional work of their male relatives. The organization was converted into a co-operative society in 1959 as the Vishnupur Mahilā Samabāya Samiti. It runs training courses as also a production centre.

Padmaja Naidu Arogyābās & Janakalyān Samabāya Samiti

This association aiming at the rehabilitation of cured leprosy patients, started its work in 1964 at Nabajibanpur near Bankura town. The colony of cured lepers that it set up there consists of some 208 families comprising about 500 men and women who built themselves the roads, houses etc. of the colony extending over 108 acres of land. The economic activities of the settlement are mainly confined to agriculture and poultry farming. The Samiti also runs two community centres, one for men and the other for women, where the students receive practical training in agriculture, handicrafts, sanitation etc. The State Government has sanctioned a recurring grant to the institution and the Tribal Welfare Department plans to establish centres for mat-weaving, carpentry, leather-work and plastic crafts within the colony. The organization is run by an elected panchayat headed by the District Magistrate of Bankura as its Chairman, while the members are elected from amongst the inmates of the colony.

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

Voluntary social service organizations, however numerous or well-equipped, cannot meet all the requirements of a community. In a welfare State, they need be supplemented by governmental efforts.

Bankura State Welfare Home

To rehabilitate the large number of children orphaned in Bankura during the famine of 1943-44, the then Government of Bengal established in 1944 the Bankura State Welfare Home 4.8 km. (3 miles) west of Bankura railway station in a small village called Pāthrādāṅgā. Between 1949 and 1960 the old structure of the Home was replaced by new buildings housing 3 dormitories, 2 kitchens, office apartments, a segregation ward and staff quarters. The Home aims at educating its young inmates through academic and vocational training in such a manner that they may become "normal individuals in their private lives, useful members of their families and efficient citizens of the society." It runs a school up to Class VI standard with voca-

[1] This institution has been more elaborately dealt with in the chapter on Education and Culture (Chapter XIII).

tional training facilities in weaving, tailoring and music. Students showing aptitude for higher education are admitted into suitable academic institutions in Bankura or Calcutta and all their expenses are borne by the Home.

The State Education Department is in superior control of the institution and spent an amount of Rs. 89,353 for it in 1965-66. Its immediate management, however, rests with the Superintendent of the Home who works under a committee of which the District Magistrate is the President and the District Social Education Officer, the Secretary.

Other social service organizations assisted by Government

The State Government also helps a number of private organizations of Bankura town including the Hindu Satkār Samiti with 100 members, the Friends' Union with 60 members, the Rabindra Saṁsad with 56 members, the Debendra Smriti Byāyāmāgār with 150 members and the Bankura District Library Association with 300 members.

Social education services

There are certain institutions in the district catering for social education. These have been dealt with in the chapter on Education and Culture.

Old-age pension

Since 1965-66, the State Government has launched an old-age pension scheme in the district to provide an insurance cover against poverty and infirmity in advanced age. The scheme provides for a monthly pension payable to each deserving individual above 65 who has no other means of livelihood. In 1965-66, 44 persons and up to April 1966, 22 persons were benefited by this scheme.

Advancement of backward classes and tribes

During the First Plan period, three welfare centres for the backward classes were set up at Chaugān (P.S. Vishnupur), Phulkusmā (P.S. Raipur) and Ukhrādihi (P.S. Gangajalghati), 126 wells were dug, an irrigation scheme called Jhiku Khāl within P.S. Raipur was taken up which brought about 1,600 acres of land under cultivation, a seed-lac training centre was opened at Khatra. 3 hostels attached to the Khatra. Kānkrādānrā and Ranibandh High schools were expanded for tribal boarders and a club house was constructed at Kusthaliā in P.S. Gangajalghati. During the Second Plan period. 210 wells were sunk, a hostel attached to the Jorehirā School was constructed for tribal boarders and another was constructed for Scheduled Caste students attached to the Ranibandh High School. An irrigation scheme, called the Raṅgananda Jore Scheme, which brought 121 acres under cultivation in P.S. Khatra, was also completed. Six tanks were re-excavated and 10 pumping sets were distributed at various places in the district for the benefit of the backward classes, besides the opening of 8 co-operative grain *golās* at Jhānṭipāhāri (P.S. Chhatna), Bharādihi (P.S. Gangajalghati), *Piārdobā (P.S. Vishnupur), Nāchnā and Ranibandh (P.S. Ranibandh)*, Khatra (P.S. Khatra) and Sāreṅgā and Phulkusmā (P.S. Raipur). House-building grants were also made available to

tribals and a number of live-stock distributed amongst them for rearing.

Prohibition and factory laws

Except for appointing a Temperance Officer recently and enforcing a 'dry day' once a week in the industrial areas in the State (there is no 'industrial area' in Bankura), the State Government has taken no steps so far to enforce prohibition anywhere in West Bengal including the district of Bankura. As regards the enforcement of factory laws, it may be stated that barring rice mills, concentrated mainly in Bankura town and Jhāṇṭipāhāri, there is no big mill or factory in the district. Application of factory laws and welfare of industrial labour are, therefore, not of much consequence here. Even so, these subjects have been dealt with in the chapter on Industries (Chapter V) in so far as they relate to rice mills and such other establishments.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

No daily newspaper is published from Bankura. The popular Calcutta dailies, both in English and in Bengali, like *The Statesman*, *The Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*, *The Hindusthan Standard* (all in English), and the *Ānanda Būzār Patrikā*, the *Jugāntar*, the *Dainik Basumati* (all in Bengali), are in common circulation in the district. Two Bengali weeklies published from Calcutta—the *Desh* and the *Amrita* —are also widely read.

Periodicals published from the district are mostly in the Bengali language. The *Abhijān* and the *Mallabhum*, two Bengali weeklies published from Vishnupur and Bankura respectively, the *Hindu Bāni*, a Bengali fortnightly published from Bankura and *The Merchant*, an English monthly published from the same place, are worthy of mention. These local journals mainly publish news and views on current affairs emphasizing those relating to the district. A monthly magazine in Bengali with an English title, the *Runner*, is published from Bankura town and deals with literary and cultural topics.

CHAPTER XVI

PLACES OF INTEREST

Abantikā—A village in Vishnupur police station with a population of 468 in 1961 and about 6.4 km. (4 miles) north of Vishnupur town off the Vishnupur-Sonamukhi metalled road and on the right (south) bank of the Dwarakeswar river. Its principal attraction is a *navaratna rāsmancha* (a nine-towered shrine on a high plinth in which the images of Krishna and his consort Rādhikā are installed on ceremonial occasions) which provides interesting examples of temple decoration not commonly met with elsewhere. The walls of this brick-built structure display good trellis-work instead of the usual terracotta plaques.

Ajodhyā—A fairly large village with a population of 1,387 (according to the 1961 Census) in the Vishnupur police station, situated on the north bank of the Dwarakeswar river, 11.3 km. (7 miles) northwest of Vishnupur town. It can be reached from Rāmsāgar railway station, 4.8 km. (3 miles) away, on the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway with which it is connected by an unmetalled road passing over, in fair weather, the more or less dry bed of the Dwarakeswar river. It is an ancient village which, in mediaeval times, was a renowned seat of Sanskrit learning. Many *tols*, or Sanskrit schools, once flourished here—the last one having been closed down only recently. A large number of old Sanskrit manuscripts on *Kāvya*, *Vyākarana*, *Nyāya*, *Smriti*, *Darsana* and *Jyotisha* was recovered from this village which now forms a part of the collection of the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad. The village is also one of the biggest centres of bell-metal industry in the district with 53 artisan families working in 25 different workshops. There was an indigo factory here in the days of the East India Company. In a recent field survey conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, it was found that the village is now populated by no less than 23 castes, all embracing the Hindu faith.

History of the Bandyopadhyay family

An important zemindar family still lives in the village whose ancestors built the temple of Rādhā-Dāmodar, twelve Siva temples and an enormous *rāsmancha* which is one of the biggest of its kind in the district. Founded in the third or the fourth quarter of the 18th century by one Rammohan Bandyopadhyay, son of Nimāi Chandra Bandyopadhyay, the family claims its descent from Bhattanārāyan, believed to be one of the five Brahmins brought to Bengal

from Kānyakubja (Kanauj) by the legendary Bengali king, Ādi Sur. Rammohan, although devoid of learning, was a hard-working, intelligent and ambitious man with great qualities of leadership. He took service in an indigo plantation in Hooghly district and shortly rose to the rank of dewan by dint of his efficiency. He had three brothers, Krishnamohan, Lalmohan and Gadadhar by name. Having amassed a fabulous fortune in the indigo business, he purchased many landed estates and set himself up as a big zemindar. His connexions with the indigo trade were instrumental in getting his youngest brother, Gadadhar into a high post in an indigo plantation in Bankura district which led to further accumulation of wealth by this family of four brothers, who were also very loyal to the British. Gadadhar helped the British administration during the Sepoy Mutiny and, as a reward, received the title of Rāi Bāhādur. With the demise of the four brothers, the fortunes of the family began to decline rapidly and by 1920, large portions of the zemindari were sold out. It was finally taken over by the State Government under the Estates Acquisition Act of 1953.

Amarkānan—An important centre of social workers flanking the Bankura-Mejia-Raniganj Road, 3.2 km. (2 miles) south of Gangajalghati and in the same police station. The area now occupied by the Amarkānan Āsram, as the organization is popularly called, was previously covered by a forest known as the 'Māchhrāṅgār Jaṅgal' situated between Bhairabpur and Konr villages.

In response to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, Govindaprasad Singha, Head Master of the Gangajalghati Primary School, converted his institution into a National School in 1921 and had it affiliated to the Gauḍiya Sarvavidyāyatan, a nationalist educational organization of Calcutta. A group of young men fired by the ideals of rural reconstruction and emancipation from foreign rule gathered around him and, when the sphere of their activities expanded, had the centre removed from Gangajalghati to the new site which was named Amarkānan to perpetuate the memory of Amarnath Chattopadhyay, one of their deceased colleagues. The initial activities of the institution included the running of a school and a charitable dispensary, organizing relief works in the neighbourhood and various other constructive works sponsored by the Indian National Congress. In 1930, the students and teachers of the school as also the social workers courted arrest by violating the Salt Act. The then Government confiscated the properties of the Āsram which were, however, returned in a much damaged state in 1931. Work started afresh and a larger organization has since been built up over the years. The Primary school developed into the Amarkānan Desabandhu Vidyālaya which is now a Multi-purpose Higher Secondary school with more than 600 students on its rolls and hostel accommodation for 100 pupils and a fine auditorium rarely met with

in a rural institution of its kind. After independence, the activities of the organization, besides running the Desabandhu Vidyālaya, have been directed towards setting up of night schools in the neighbouring villages, tribal welfare, removal of untouchability, running the Rāmakrishna Library at Amarkānan as also 2 Senior Basic schools, one at Ukhrādihi and the other at Kshuder Dāng, 2 permanent relief centres at Kesiārā and Ban-Āsuriā and a school-cum-community centre at Govindadhām. The organization also plans to establish a degree college at Amarkānan, to set up junior technical schools and a few more Primary schools in the neighbourhood and to construct a hostel at Bankura for the accommodation of poor and meritorious students studying there.

Ambikānagar—A village in the Ranibandh police station, perched on the high right bank immediately to the south of the confluence of the Kangsabati and the Kumari rivers, 16 km. (10 miles) south-west of Khatra and about the same distance north-west of Ranibandh. In 1961, it had a population of 1,769 persons. An unmetalled road branching off in an westerly direction from the Bankura-Khatra-Ranibandh all-weather metalled road from a point just south of the course of the Kangsabati river leads to the village approximately 5.6 km. (3½ miles) away. To the archaeologist, the village is of considerable interest as it yielded several artefacts of the palaeolithic and neolithic periods. The hamlet contains two laterite temples of some antiquity. The smaller of them is more or less intact and houses a *liṅgam*. The superstructure of the larger temple is now gone but it appears from the rather extensive basement made of large blocks of stone that the original temple must have been of no mean proportions. The present temple is shabbily renovated with a thatched roof and houses the female deity *Ambikā* greatly venerated by local people. With Paresnāth, an ancient Jain site some 3.2 km. (2 miles) to the west, it is possible that the diety, whose name corresponds to that of a well-known Jain goddess, is of Jain origin although she is worshipped at present according to Hindu rites.

History of the Ambikānagar Raj family

In mediaeval times, the village gave its name to a large pargana ruled over by a family of influential zemindars. Of this family, O'Malley in his old Bankura District Gazetteer gave the following account: "According to tradition, this tract was originally ruled over by a Raja of the washerman caste, called Chintāmani Dhobā; and the *pāl* or grain measure used in these perganas is still called *Chintāmani pāl*. Legend goes on to say that Dhalbhum was wrested from him by one Jagannāth Deb of Dholpur in Rājputānā, who went on a pilgrimage to Jagannāth (Puri) and on his way back paid a visit to the Nawab at Cuttack. The Nawab called him 'Shāhzādā' meaning a prince, and the quick-witted Rajput at once begged that the title thus given might be confirmed. Pleased by his ready address, the Nawab gave him some of his troops to enable him to win the

title by carving out a principality for himself. Jagannāth Deb then came to Supur, attacked and defeated Chintāmani Dhobā, and became Raja of Supur. In commemoration of this conquest, Jagannāth Deb was called Dhabal, and enjoyed the title of Shāhzādā bestowed on him by the Nawab. After 32 generations had passed, the Supur Raj, as it is locally called, was divided in consequence of a disputed succession, Tek Chandra, the elder son of the Raja, receiving a 9½ annas share, and the younger Khargeswar a 6½ annas share. The former continued to live at Supur, and the latter at Ambikānagar about 8 miles from Supur. The descendants of Tek Chandra became heavily involved in debt, and the greater portion of the Supur estate has consequently been sold. The residence of the present representative of this branch of the family is at Khatra about two miles south of Supur. The descendants of Khargeswar still live at Ambikānagar, but their estate has been sold in satisfaction of debts. Both families are Khattriyas by caste and are related to the families of Bishnupur, Rāipur, Shyāmsundarpur and others."[1]

Unlike most of the landed gentry in Bengal, the zemindar family of Ambikānagar not only took a keen interest in the freedom struggle of the country but also actively participated in it. Rāicharan Dhabal Deb of this family is known to have been in close contact with the revolutionary Kshudirām Basu who was hanged by the British in 1908 for an attempt at Muzaffarpur on the life of Mr. Kingsford, one-time Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. Although the resources of his zemindari had been greatly reduced at the time, Rāicharan Dhabal Deb not only spent large sums of money for the ailing and the distressed but also financed the activities of a band of revolutionaries headed by Kshudirām Basu who set up a secret camp at Chhendāpāthār, deep in the jungles of Ranibandh police station bordering Midnapur district, for target practice and manufacture of explosives. Rāicharan's complicity with the terrorists led to a police raid on the Ambikānagar palace in 1907-08 resulting in the loss or destruction of most of the family papers and the arrest of Rāicharan for his participation in the revolutionary movement. His son Kālāchand had no male issue and the last scion of the family is Kālāchand's daughter Sunandā (wife of Rādhāraman Deo) with whose demise the line of direct descent of the family will be extinct.

Baraban

In the village Baraban, off Ambikānagar, a thriving group of hereditary artisans of the Sahish community (a Scheduled Caste) manufactures combs in the traditional manner from wood and horn which find a ready market in the neighbourhood. The Baraban Chiruni Silpa Samabāya Samiti—a recently-organized co-operative society—now looks after the interests of the craftsmen.

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 166.

Bahulārā—An ancient village in Onda police station with a population of 505 in 1961 famous for its large brick temple dedicated to Siddheswar Mahādev. It can be reached from Ondāgrām railway station on the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway by proceeding north-east for 4.8 km. (3 miles) along an unmetalled road to the village Chābrā and then for another 2.4 km. (1½ miles) by a village road to the temple. Beglar gave the following account of the temple in the Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII :

"The finest brick temple in the district, and the finest though not the largest brick temple that I have seen in Bengal, is the one at Bahulara, on the right bank of the Darikeswara river, 12 miles (19.3 km.) from Bankura; the temple is of brick, plastered; the ornamentation is carefully cut in the brick, and the plaster made to correspond to it. There are, however, ornaments on the plaster along, but none inconsistent with, the brick ornamentation below. I conclude, therefore, that the plaster formed part of the original design; the mouldings of the basement are to a great extent gone, but from fragments here and there that exist, a close approximation can be made to what it was; some portions are, however, not recoverable. . . . The present entrance is not the original old one, but is a modern accretion, behind which the real old doorway, with its tall, triangular opening of overlapping courses, is hidden. This old opening is still to be seen internally; it consists of a rectangular opening, 41 courses of bricks in height, over which rise the triangular portion in a series of corbels, each 5 courses in depth; the width of the opening is 4 feet 10 inches; there is no dividing sill, and from the facade of the temple it is evident that the cell, with its attached portico in the thickness of the wall itself, stood alone without any adjuncts in front; there are, however, the remains of a *mahāmandapa*, which was added on in recent times but it is widely different in construction and in material to the old temple, and is probably not so old as the British rule in India. The object of worship inside is named Siddheswara, being a large lingam, apparently *in situ*. I conclude, therefore, that the temple was originally Saivic. Besides the lingam there are inside a naked Jain standing figure, a ten-armed female, and a Ganesa; the Jain figure is clear proof of the existence of the Jain religion in these parts in old times, though I cannot point to the precise temple or spot which was devoted to this sect. The temple had subordinate temples disposed round it in the usual manner; there were seven round the three sides and four corners, and one in front, the last being most probably a temple to Nandi, the *vāhana* of Siva; the whole group was enclosed within a square brick enclosure; subordinate temples and walls are equally in ruins now, forming isolated and long mounds respectively."

S. K. Saraswati gives the following account of the Bahulārā temple :[1]

"It is made of brick and is situated on a low mound, being originally surrounded by eight small subsidiary shrines and enclosed by a compound wall, all of which are now in ruins. The temple is of the single-celled type, and the sanctum is approached by a vestibule in the thickness of the front wall with a triangular corbelled arch opening. It rests on a plinth which consists of several courses of elaborate mouldings and is of the *ratha* plan. The *bāḍa* or the sanctum cube is divided into five segments by three horizontal bands forming the *bandhanā* and dividing the *jāṅgha* into two halves. Besides the division of the plan into *rathas*, the plainness of the walls is relieved by niches, those on the central *rathas* being capped by miniature *sikharas*. Several courses of projected mouldings separate the *bāḍa* from the *gandi*. The latter has a chaste and refined contour, the corners as well as the edges of the *pagas* being rounded off. The whole surface of the *gandi* is covered with intricate traceries of the *chaitya*-window patterns, scroll-work and other designs. Of the last the most interesting are the tiers of miniature *sikharas* in the lower stages of the *rāhā-pagas*. This is a new interpretation of the logical theme of *aṅga-sikharas* on the body of the main *sikhara*, not met with so far; but it seems to have been characteristic of the *Nāgara* temples of this region as is evident from the temple known as Jaṭār *deul* in the Sundarbans. The top of the temple has tumbled down and the hand of time has been heavy on the mouldings and decorative patterns. Yet, considered as a whole, this brick monument, because of its graceful proportions, elegant contours and chaste style of decoration, seems to constitute one of the outstanding productions of Indian temple architecture. Coomaraswamy assigns the temple to the tenth century A D. Dikshit thinks this date to be a century or two too early. From general architectonic shape and ornamental style, a date in the eleventh century A.D. may not appear to be unreasonable. At Dihar (Bānkurā District, West Bengal) there are two stone temples, of which the *sikharas* have gone. The treatment of the cube of the *bāḍa* in each case resembles that of the Siddhesvara at Bahulārā, and all the three may be regarded as belonging to the same conception and to approximately the same period. The brick temple known as the Jaṭār *deul* in the Sundarbans, when in its original state, seems also to have been an eminent production of this conception. Modern conservation has entirely obliterated its original shape and features, but originally, as appears from an earlier photograph, the temple had considerable architectural merits and closely resembled the Siddhesvara in plan, elevation and decorative treatment.

[1] R. C. Majumdar (Ed.)—The History and Culture of the Indian People: Struggle for Empire. Bombay, 1957. Chapter XX; pp. 608-09.

"From a study of the temples of the *Nāgara* design in this part of India, it appears that they are unmistakably related to the Orissan movement. As a class they are nearer to the early group of Orissa than to the typically Orissan, though the link with the latter cannot be entirely ruled out. One or two, as noticed above, may, again, be found to have significant affinities with the distant western movement. These apart, the Bengali temples may also be recognised to have certain individual features. The Bengali architects displayed, to a certain extent, a better sense of reserve and restraint than their contemporaries in other parts of India. They exhibited a more refined taste in the choice of their decorative patterns and their balanced adjustments. The *Nāgara* temples in Bengal may not have the grandeur of the massive and stupendous stone monuments seen in other parts of India but they are surely more elegant and graceful, and the brick specimens in particular, testify to a fine and mature knowledge of the Bengali builders in the science and art of building."

A point of special interest about Bahulārā recently mentioned by another author[1] is that Jainism, an important religion of the Bankura area in the ancient period, reached a phase of decadence during the 11th and the 12th centuries of the Christian era when Siva and Sakti worship belonging to the Brahminical faith gradually replaced it. The stone image of Parswanātha, still preserved in the sanctum of the Bahulārā temple, confirms the existence of an earlier Jain settlement here which was usurped by Brahminism and transformed into a Sivaite centre. The erstwhile Jain connexions of the place are further proved from the several small brick *stupas* exposed to the adjacent east of the temple during the excavations carried out in 1922-23. On the analogy of similar *stupas* found at Kankāliṭilā, near Mathurā, it has now been proved beyond doubt that such votive structures were related to Jain ritual. It is, however, not certain whether the existing temple was originally constructed by the Jains and taken over by the Siva-worshippers as such or was constructed by them on the site vacated by their predecessors. More extensive explorations *in situ* can alone settle this issue. Another point of interest relates to the sculptures which, except for a few examples inside niches high up the walls, do not display any terracotta figures, the profuse display of which was customary in Bankura temples in later ages. H. Pande, Superintendent of the Eastern Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, stated in his Annual Report for 1916-17 that originally colour was used to decorate the profuse embellishments on the temple—a unique device rarely, if ever, followed in other terracotta temples of this region.

From all available evidence, Bahulārā appears to have been an important Sivaite centre in Bankura district for close upon a thousand

[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1965. pp. 138-39.

years. The place is, accordingly, held in high religious esteem and the annual *Gājan* festival celebrated here during the last three days of the Bengali year (middle of April) attracts many thousands of pilgrims from far and near.

Bankura Subdivision—Bankura or the Sadar subdivision is by far the larger of the two subdivisions of the district. It takes its name from the headquarters town of the district, which is also the subdivisional headquarters. The subdivision lies between 22°38′ and 23°38′ North latitudes and 86°36′ and 87°25′ East longitudes. It covers a total area of 5,007.8 sq. km. (1,933.5 sq. miles) and comprises the 13 police stations of Saltora, Mejia, Gangajalghati, Barjora, Chhatna, Bankura, Onda, Indpur, Khatra, Taldangra, Simlapal, Ranibandh and Raipur.

Geographically, the subdivision lies between the plains of Bengal in the east and the Chotanagpur plateau on the west. To the east and north-east are expanses of alluvial tracts while towards the west and south-west, the undulating land surface gradually rises and is interspersed with rocky hillocks, low ridges and valleys. Of the hills, the Bihārināth (448 metres or 1,469 feet), Susuniā (439 metres or 1,441 feet) and Konro (122 metres or 400 feet) are of some importance. On the western fringes of the subdivision, barren wastes of red lateritic soil are a common sight. Though largely denuded through careless fellings, large tracts of land in the south and south-western thanas are covered by forests of stately *sāl* and *mahuā* trees.

The Damodar forms the northern boundary of the subdivision and of the police stations of Saltora, Mejia and Barjora. The Dwarakeswar, flowing from north-west to south-east, divides the subdivision into two halves. The Gandheswari and the Berai are the two principal tributaries of the Dwarakeswar. The Kangsabati and its affluents the Kumari and the Jaypanda and the tributaries Tarafeni and Bhairab-banki have been brought under the integrated Kangsabati Project with a view to utilizing their water potentials for irrigating a vast acreage of agricultural land and saving it from the ravages of devastating floods. A continuous dam over the Kangsabati and the Kumari is under construction from Mukutmanipur in Khatra police station to Lipidiri in Ranibandh police station. Sites along the Dwarakeswar, the Kangsabati and the Kumari had, from palaeolithic to mediaeval times, nursed several cultures.

The subdivision is divided into 3,846 rural mauzas. Urban areas, taken together, account for only 25.6 sq. km. (9.9 sq. miles). Bankura, the headquarters town, is under a municipality established in 1869. The only other town, Khatra, does not have any municipality.

According to the Census of 1961, the total population of the subdivision consists of 11,74,978 persons of whom 11,05,388 live in rural areas and 69,590 in towns. 3,26,584 persons or 27.8% of

the population of the subdivision and 19.6% of the total population of the district are members of the Scheduled Castes and 1,58,821 persons or 13.5% of the population of the subdivision and 9.4% of the total population of the district belong to the Scheduled Tribes.

Literates (i.e. those who can read and write simple letters in their mother tongues) and educated persons, taken together, number only 2,69,438 of whom 2,19,763 are males and 49,675 females. The literacy figures for the subdivision work out to 22.9% of its own population and 16.2% of the total population of the district. There is a medical college at Bankura and two degree colleges, one at Bankura and the other at Pānchmurā (P.S. Taldangra).

There are two all-purpose hospitals in Bankura town, one oridinary hospital at Sārehgā (P.S. Raipur) and another of the same type at Junebediā. There is a number of Government and privately run leprosy clinics and leprosy after-care colonies, of which the Gauripur Leper Asylum, situated about 9.6 km. (6 miles) north-west of the district town, and Nabajibanpur after-care colony are the largest. Primary Health Centres exist at each thana headquarters.

According to the Census of 1961, 3,62,214 persons are engaged in agriculture and 36,966 persons depend on industrial occupations. While large-scale industries are conspicuous by their absence, modern manufacturing establishments are represented by the rice mills of Bankura town, Jhānṭipāhāri (P.S. Chhatna), Beliātore (P.S. Barjora), Onda and Chhatna and by small engineering workshops located mostly at the district headquarters. Of the economically significant cottage and small-scale industries, cotton textile weaving is the most important. Although silk weaving is qualitatively and quantitatively more important in the Vishnupur subdivision, there is a fair sprinkling of silk weavers in some cotton weaving centres of the Sadar subdivision as well. Notable among these are Bankura town, Rājnagar, Kenjākurā, Gopināthpur (all in P.S. Bankura), Pānchmurā and Raipur. Silk-worms are reared and silk is spun also in the villages of Dhandā, Punisol, Kesabpur, Chingāni, Tilāghāgri, Simlāpāl, Pukhurdābā, Pāthardābā and Barakhuliā. The brass and bell-metal industry is also of importance and its principal centres are located at Bankura town, Kenjākurā, Lakshmipur (P.S. Taldangra) and Susuniā (P.S. Chhatna). Terracotta dolls and toys of Pānchmurā and Syāndrā, especially the long-necked terracotta horses of Pānchmurā, have attracted world-wide notice for their high artistic quality stemming from the traditional folk culture of the region. The conch-shell industry of Hāṭgrām (P.S. Indpur), once an excellent rural craft, now languishes for want of patronage. The leather industry of Bankura town and the cutlery industry of Ghuṭgaryā (P.S. Barjora) provide employment to a number of people.

A number of architecturally significant old monuments lies within

the subdivision of which the temples at Bahulārā, Bikrampur and Belāṭukri (in P.S. Onda), Chhatna (in P.S. Chhatna), Ekteswar and Sonātopal (in P.S. Bankura), Deulbhiryā and Hārmāsrā (in P.S. Taldangra), Ghuṭgaryā and Jagannāthpur (in P.S. Barjora) deserve mention. Besides these extant shrines, the ruins of forts and temples at Pākhannā (P.S. Barjora), Sārengarh (P.S. Ranibandh), Asurgarh (P.S. Taldangra), Sālibahanergarh (P.S. Bankura), Paresnāth and Ambikānagar (P.S. Ranibandh) are historically important.

The *Chaitra-Saṁkrānti Gājan* festival at Ekteswar, Bahulārā and Jagannāthpur, the *Gājan* celebrations of Dharma at Beliatore, the *Sivarātri* fair at Ekteswar and the *Vijayā-Dasami* at Sonātopal attract numerous Hindu pilgrims. The annual hunting festival of the Santals at Susuniā, Bihārināth (P.S. Saltora) and Jhilimili (P.S. Ranibandh) draw huge crowds. A mosque at Bankura town is visited by many devout Muslims during the *Muharram* and *Id* festivals.

Bankura Town--The principal town and administrative headquarters of the district sharing the name of the Sadar subdivision and the police station in which it is situated. It lies on 23°14′ North latitude and 87°4′ East longitude and is bounded on the north by the river Gandheswari, a tributary of the Dwarakeswar, and on the south by the Dwarakeswar itself, both meeting near the village Bhutsahar 4.8 km. (3 miles) south-east of the town.

The Kharagpur-Ādrā-Tāṭānagar branch of the South Eastern Railway, which came into existence in 1902, passes by the town which is also connected with the rice-growing hinterlands in the north-eastern thanas of the district by a narrow-gauge railway known as the Bankura Damodar River Railway. The town has road connexions with Durgapur in the north-east, Purulia in the west and Midnapur in the south as also with important towns and all the thana headquarters in the district.

There is no dependable evidence to prove, even approximately, the date of the establishment of the town. The oldest extant building here is supposed to be a temple of Raghunāth in the Rāmpur locality which bears the date 1561 Saka or 1639 A.D. The shrine has a modern look, may be through successive repairs, and the inscription is in current Bengali script rendering this evidence unworthy of credence. A place called Bāncoondā and/or Bhāncoorāh appears to have been used by the East India Company's forces as a halting station during the second Maratha invasion led by Shew Bhaṭṭ. The place again finds mention as a camping ground for the Company's forces during their expedition against certain frontier chieftains in 1765 A.D.

Following the acquisition of *Diwāni* by the East India Company, Zilla Bissenpore was placed under a Collector stationed at Bissenpore. Thereafter, between 1787 and 1805, the district successively belonged

to Birbhum and Burdwan. Vishnupur's importance as the administrative headquarters gradually declined during this period and in 1805 a new district styled 'Jangal Mahāls' was formed when most of the present district of Bankura came to be included in it but the collection of revenue continued to be the responsibility of the Collectors of Midnapur and Birbhum. In 1809, by an order of the Board of Revenue, this responsibility was transferred to an Assistant Collector stationed at Bankura. In 1833, the Jangal Mahāls district was broken up and the former Bissenpore territories came under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate-Collector of Burdwan but a Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector was stationed in Bankura town to look after the affairs of the Bissenpore territories. In 1837, the Bissenpore territories were finally separated from the Burdwan district and formed into the district of West Burdwan with its headquarters at Bankura town. In 1859, a Magistrate-Collector was appointed for the district of 'Bāncoorāh' with his headquarters at Bankura town and in 1881 a judgeship for the district was created with the District Judge's seat located at the same place. Since then the town has continued to be the administrative headquarters of the district.

The primary factors leading to the growth of the town stemmed from its administrative requirements. Roads and, eventually, railway communications between the headquarters and different parts of the district as also the neighbouring districts began to be opened up from the second quarter of the last century. And this brought in its train another factor, no less important, for the development of the town. The rice-producing hinterlands stretching on all directions as far as Purulia and the borders of the neighbouring districts of Hooghly, Burdwan and Midnapur found their common mart in Bankura town which led to its rapid expansion as a centre of agricultural marketing and a focal point of the transport network. The sizable growth of the rice-milling industry in Bankura town reflects this commercial and urban development over the years.

Writing in 1908, O'Malley had said : "Before the opening of the railway, Bankura was a small and somewhat straggling town, but since then it has been expanding greatly and new houses are springing up in every quarter." A year before the railway was opened in 1902, the town had a population of 20,737 which increased to 49,369 in 1951 and to 62,833 in 1961. Thus, within a period of 60 years the population growth has been more than threefold. The Bankura Municipality, constituted in 1869, had an area of 15.4 sq. km. (5.96 sq. miles) in 1911 which increased to only 18.1 sq. km. (7 sq. miles) in 1961. During this period, the density of population per sq. mile rose from 3,935 in 1911 to 8,976 in 1961. It is evident from these figures that the territorial growth of the town has failed to catch

up with its population 'explosion' leading inevitably to severe congestion in some of the localities.

The town owes much of its development and prosperity to the pioneering enterprise of the Christian missionaries of the Wesleyan Mission. The first few of the modern pucka buildings were constructed by them. "The first missionary who worked here was the Revd. J. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society, who used to visit the town from Burdwan as far back as 1840. He never resided in Bankura, but established several schools, the chief of which, founded in 1846, has since become the Zilla School. The first European missionary who made his residence in Bankura was the Revd. J. R. Broadhead of the Wesleyan Mission, who commenced work in the year 1877 and resided here for 10 years. During that time he built the present Girls' Training School in the Mission compound, the church and other property belonging to the Mission in Lālbāzār to the east of the town. In 1889, the Kuchkuchiā High School was started by the Revd. W. Spink, and the work thus begun has been carried on steadily. The Methodist Missionary Society (formerly, Wesleyan Mission) now maintains a large college and High school, a Middle Vernacular school, a Female Training school, and three Primary girls' schools. The work in connection with the Leper Asylum on the outskirts of the town is also under the supervision of members of the Mission, though the buildings, which were erected in 1902, belong to the Mission to Lepers in India and the East. The town also owes to the Mission the Central Hall near the post office, built by the Revd. J. W. Duthie in 1899."[1]

The public buildings, namely the criminal courts, the Collectorate offices, the police lines, the hospital, the jail, the post office etc. are located in the south-western quarter of the town near the residence of the District Magistrate, a fine bungalow in spacious grounds known as the Hill House. A small sports stadium has recently been constructed west of the police barracks which were previously occupied by troops stationed at Bankura. There are three main roads running through the town of which the middle one is lined with shops and is known as the Bazar Road and proceeds north-east from the town towards Beliatore and Durgapur after crossing the adjacent Gandheswari river over a causeway which used to be submerged when the river was in spate causing dislocation of traffic between the headquarters town and the thanas lying to the north and north-east of the district. This difficulty has since been overcome by the construction of a bridge over the river. The Dwarakeswar, flowing to the south of Bankura town, used to present similar difficulties in the past which have now been eliminated by another modern bridge crossing the river 3.2 km. (2 miles) south-east of the town near the

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers: Bankura. Calcutta, 1908, pp. 154-55.

village of Ekteswar. Over it pass the roads to Khatra, Vishnupur, Taldangra and Simlapal. Another highway proceeds north-west to Chhatna, Jhāntipāhāri and Purulia.

According to the Census of 1961, the population of Bankura town is 62,833, of which 33,473 are males and 29,360 females living in 10,099 residential houses and 10,475 households. Literate and educated persons, taken together, number 28,286 of whom 19,022 are males and 9,264 females. There are 8 High and Higher Secondary (including Multi-purpose Higher Secondary) schools in the town which has also a degree college and a medical college. There are two hospitals in the town besides two leper asylums. The Bankura Leprosy Home and Hospital, now run by the Mission to Lepers under the Methodist Church, is situated at Junebediā, 3.2 km. (2 miles) west of the town and the Gauripur Leper Asylum—one of the largest of its kind in eastern India—lies on spacious grounds some 9.6 km. (6 miles) north-west of the town.

According to the Census of 1961, 3,563 residents of the town are engaged in trade and commerce, a fact which is consistent with its status as an important centre of agricultural marketing. Another 1,674 persons hold jobs in complementary vocations connected with transport, storage and communications. But a far larger number—6,133 workers—belong to the tertiary sector of the economy and are not even indirectly connected with agriculture, industry, mining, trade, transport and commerce. Most of them are employed either in the various learned professions or in Government services. This confirms the primarily administrative character of the town. All types of manufacturing industries provide employment to 5,406 persons. There is no heavy industry worth the name. Besides sundry small engineering workshops, the only modern industry in the town is the rice-milling industry providing employment to about 500 persons in 50 separate establishments. Bankura is also a centre of some traditional and small-scale industries. There are 318 cotton weaving units which engage some 1,500 workers. Rājnagar, Gopināthpur and Demurāri-Gopināthpur are the areas where this industry is localized. The brass and bell-metal industry provides employment to about 200 people in 31 separate establishments. The leather industry engages some 100 persons.

There is no building of archaeological importance in the town. The old mosque, which is architecturally insignificant, meets the religious needs of the local Muslims. The town has a fair number of Christians who make use of the several churches for religious observances. The derelict temple at Sonātopal and the Siva temple at Ekteswar are at a distance of 8.1 km. (5 miles) and 3.2 km. (2 miles) respectively from the town. The *Gājan* festival at the Kānkātā and Daserbāndh localities attract a large number of pilgrims every

year. Many Muslims congregate at the local mosque during the *Id* and the *Muharram* celebrations.

Beliātukri—A village in the Onda police station, some 7.2 km. (4½ miles) north-west of Onda and situated on the left (north) bank of the Dwarakeswar river. Its population in 1961 was 738. It can be reached by a country road branching off north from the Bankura-Vishnupur road at a point between Onda and Bheduāsol railway stations on the South Eastern Railway. This road passes through the village Nischintapur and, in fair weather, across the Dwarakeswar.

The village contains a brick-built *sikhara* temple of Syāmchānd, the straight contours of which, bearing some resemblance to the celebrated Buddha Gaya temple, present an unusual sight in this part of the country. The shrine bears no inscription and the date when it was founded is, therefore, uncertain. But from stylistic considerations relating to the structure and the decorative motifs used on the walls, it may not be wrong to suppose that it was erected during the first half of the 17th century. The temple is claimed to have been built by a king of Vishnupur whose identity cannot be precisely established. It was abandoned following the great Dwarakeswar flood in 1865, which submerged the temple site and the neighbouring areas. Standing forlorn on a stretch of barren land, the structure is in a lamentable condition—heaps of bricks in the foreground implying the existence of subsidiary buildings, now broken down.

Beliātore—A large village in Barjora police station with a population of 2,984 in 1961, lying on the Bankura-Durgapur road, 20.9 km. (13 miles) north-east of Bankura town. It was once the seat of a few respectable zemindar families which produced a number of illustrious men of whom mention may be made of Jamini Roy, the talented Bengali painter enjoying an international reputation. The village has a hospital, a High school, an agricultural farm and 6 rice mills some of which use electricity. The Beliatore-Sonamukhi-Patrasayer road—an important all-weather thoroughfare serving the north-eastern portion of the district—branches off from the Bankura-Durgapur main road here.

To the people of the neighbourhood, Beliātore is known as an important seat of *Dharma* worship in the district. The temple of Dharmarāj is a flat-roofed masonry structure in which the vermilion-besmeared image of Dharmarāj is installed on a wooden throne. There is a large covered portico in front of the shrine where the faithful assemble during the annual *Gājan* festival held on the full-moon day in the Bengali month of *Āshāḍh* (June-July). There are several life-size wooden horses, meant for providing a ceremonial ride to the deity during the annual celebrations, which are kept in the front portico throughout the year. Legend has it that a shop-keeper of the village once chanced upon a round stone in the bed of

the Damodar which he started using as a weighing measure. He was told in a dream that he should discontinue the practice as it was causing great pain to the stone. Next morning, the shop-keeper found to his surprise that the stone was sweating all over. Discovering the hand of providence in the dream, he installed the stone as a deity which has ever since been worshipped as Dharmarāj by the local people. (The cult of Dharmarāj, very popular in Bankura district, has been dealt with in Appendix A to Chapter III.)

Bihārīnāth—An isolated forest-clad hill, the highest in the district, in the north-west corner of Saltora police station rising from the surrounding undulating terrain to a height of 442 meters (1,449 feet). From Saltora a metalled road runs north-west to the big village of Tiluri from where one may travel across open country for about 4.8 km. (3 miles) to the east to reach the northern slopes of the hill where there is a flat-roofed modern brick structure housing a *lingam*. It is now a Sivaite centre but old sculptures found *in situ* testify to its ancient history. A highly-abraded stone image of Pārswanātha reclining against one of the walls of the present temple proves that it was probably a Jain centre in the remote past. There is also a twelve-armed stone image, apparently of Vishnu, which testifies that this original Jain seat was subsequently used by Hindu devotees as a place for Vishnu worship. The latest installation of a phallic emblem provides continuous evidence of the fusion and transformation of religious thoughts at this centre embracing the Jain and Hindu faiths. The place lies some 3.2 km. (2 miles) south of the present course of the Damodar but it is not improbable that the original Jain settlement was established here by religious pioneers who propagated themselves to this point along the river immediately to the north which, in ancient times, might not have been so far apart as it is now. There are reasons to believe that Jainism on its proselytizing march from its strongholds in the immediate west penetrated the area now comprising the Bankura district along the courses of such navigable rivers.

Bikrampur—A village in the Onda police station having a population of 659 in 1961, about 6.4 km. (4 miles) north-west of Onda. It can be reached by an unmetalled road, 1.6 km. (one mile) in length, branching off south from the Bankura-Vishnupur road at a point 6.4 km. (4 miles) west of Onda. The village contains an interesting laterite temple, known as Gopāl Mandir, which is a *sikhara* structure with a *piḍhā mandapa* in front. The shrine was built in 966 Malla Saka (1659 A.D.) by a Malla king of Vishnupur who, from ancillary evidence, appears to be Raja Bir Singh II. The deity is no longer worshipped in the temple and the abandoned shrine is in a very bad state of preservation.

Chhātnā—A big village of considerable antiquity situated 12.9 km. (8 miles) north-west of Bankura town. It is the headquarters of a

police station of the same name and, besides the excellent cross-country Bankura-Purulia road, is also served by the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway.

A family of zemindars, once enjoying the title of Rajas, established itself here in 1403 A.D. The family was devoted to the local goddess Bāsuli whose patronage, it is said, was the source of its fortune. According to a local legend, a Saont by the name of Saṅkha Roy was the first king of Sāmantabhum having his capital at Chhatna. The Sāmanta line was interrupted after the death of Saṅkha Roy, when a Brahmin, one Bhabāni Jharāṭ, ascended the throne of Sāmantabhum. But he was murdered while witnessing a *Gājan* festival at Melbonā. Thereafter, a protracted period of chaos ensued. How Sāmantabhum at last emerged from the turmoil with the establishment of a Kshatriya dynasty is told in another legend which relates that a Kshatriya youth, a descendant of Bāppāditya of Chitor, while going on a pilgrimage from Banaras to Puri happened to put up at the Raja's palace at Chhatna along with his mother who was accompanying him. The Sāmanta Raja was attracted by the qualities of the young man and gave his only daughter in marriage to him. On ascending the throne, the young man, Uttara Hāmira, divided his kingdom into twelve parts and placed a Sāmanta (vassal) in charge of each. He is said to have ruled Sāmantabhum between 1275 and 1326 Saka (1353-1404 A.D.). The origin of the worship of the goddess Bāsuli at Chhatna is associated with his name. Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyānidhi thinks that Chandidās flourished in Chhatna during his reign, between 1246 and 1324 Saka (1324-1402 A.D.). The ninth sovereign of the line was one Hāmbira Uttara Roy, whose inscription had been seen by Begler on the wall of the Bāsuli temple. He came to the throne around *circa* 1474 Saka (1552 A.D.). The fifteenth ruler of the dynasty, Lakshmi Nārāyan (*c.* 1701-1724 Saka), is credited with the building of the second Bāsuli temple. He excavated a tank which is still known as Lachhman Sāyer or Rājār Bāndh. Ānandakumāri, the second wife of Raja Ānandalāl and the reigning queen from 1785 to 1833 Saka (1863-1911 A.D.), is credited with the building of the third and present temple of Bāsuli.[1]

As for the archaeological remains found in the village, the account given by Beglar in the Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII may be quoted. "The principal remains consist of some temples and ruins within a brick enclosure; the enclosure and the brick temples that existed having long become mere mounds, while the laterite temples still stand. The bricks used are mostly inscribed, and the inscription gives a name which I read as Konaha Utara Rājā, while the *pandits* read it as Hamira Utara Rājā; the

[1] Information supplied by Chhatna Union Krishi Unnayan Sarbārtha Sādhak Samabāya Samiti and communicated by the District Magistrate, Bankura.

date at the end is the same in all, viz., Saka 1476. There are 4 different varieties of the inscriptions, two engraved and two in relief; the bricks were clearly stamped while still soft and then burnt. Tradition identifies Chhātnā with Vāsuli or Vāhuli Nagara. At Daksha's sacrifice, it is said, one of the limbs of Pārvatī fell here, which thence derived its name of Vāsuli Nagara or Bāhulyā Nagara, a name mentioned in the old Bengali poet Chandī Dās. Its present name Chhātnā is derived from a grove of *chātim* or *chātni* trees, which existed here. The Rājās of the country were originally Brāhmans and lived at Bāhulyā Nagara. One of them would not worship Pārvatī under her form of Vāsuli Devī, and her favour being withdrawn from him,-he was killed by the Sāmantas (Saonts ?) Santāls, who reigned a long time. At last, the people rose up and killed all the Saonts they could; one man only escaped by hiding in the house of a low caste potter (Kumhār). For this reason, to this day, the Saonts will eat and drink with the Kumhārs.

"To this man Vāsuli Devī appeared in a dream, and encouraged him to try his fortune, assuring him of success. The man was filled with profound respect for her, and having undergone various fasts etc., he gathered together 11 other Saonts and kept wandering in the jungles. One day, when very hungry, they met a woman with a basket of *kendus* on her head. She, pitying their condition, gave them one apiece from her basket; they asked for more, and she gave; but one of them impatiently snatched away one from her. However, the 12 Saonts were refreshed, and the woman was highly pleased. Calling them, she said—'Go into the jungle and take 12 *kend* or *kendu* saplings, and go and fight for your Rāj; Vāsuli Devī and I will restore your Rāj.' They accordingly sallied out, killed the Rājā, and obtained possession of the kingdom again. These twelve ruled jointly; the man who had snatched the *kend* fruit died first; the remaining eleven ruled by turns till, finding it too troublesome, they agreed to give the sole power to one of their number. The descendants of these men are the present Sāmanta Rājās, who call themselves Chhatris.

"The temple is ascribed to Hamira Utara Rājā and the legend about it is that Vāsuli Devī one night appeared in a dream to the Rājā, and said—'Behold, certain cartmen and *mahājans* are passing through your territory and are at this moment under a particular tree; they have with them a stone in which I have taken up my abode. Take it and set it up to be worshipped, for I am pleased with you, and will remain with you.' The Rājā, accordingly sent men and stopped the *mahājans* and cartmen, and seized the stone in payment of ground rent for the ground they had occupied during the night. He then set it up in the temple which we now see."

The temples mentioned by Beglar are now in ruins, the fragments of which can still be seen to the north of the Bankura-Purulia road

near the Chhatna police station. The deity Bāsuli was removed long ago to a brick temple outside the village at some distance to the south-west of the old temple. This shrine having crumbled to ruins, another small brick temple was built near it in or about 1872 A.D. in which the goddess is now installed and worshipped. The latest shrine of Bāsuli is a five-towered structure displaying a number of terracotta plaques which may be considered as very late specimens of this style of temple embellishment in Bankura district.

There is an ancient tank at Chhatna known as Bolpokhariā. Although small in area, it is deep and its water never fails. O'Malley, in the old Bankura District Gazetteer, mentions a legend about the tank which relates that when the Chhatna Raj was very powerful and the goddess Bāsuli was very much revered, a small girl of unknown identity once asked a woman selling shell-bracelets to give her a pair of bangles and get the payment from her father, the priest in the temple of Bāsuli. The woman gave the child the ornaments and on going to the priest was informed that he had no daughter. Surprised as they were, they came to the tank and saw in the middle of it two small hands decorated with shell-bangles appear above the water and vanish in a moment. People still believe that the little girl was none other than goddess Bāsuli herself.

Tradition has it that the mediaeval Bengali poet Chandidās, who was a staunch worshipper of Bāsuli, lived at Chhatna. The exploits of goddess Bāsuli have been described in a Sanskrit text called *Bāsuli Māhātmya* by Padmalochan Sarmā, the Bengali version of which by Rādhānāth Dās, however, makes no mention of Chandidās.[1] Identity of the place where Chandidās of *Padāvali* fame had flourished led to a great controversy amongst Bengali scholars some years ago. Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyānidhi and Satyakinkar Sāhānā of Bankura contended that Chandidās lived at Chhatna while other scholars led by Harekrishna Mukhopadhyay Sāhityaratna and Basanta Ranjan Ray Vidwadballav of Birbhum held that the poet resided at Nānnoor in Birbhum district. The controversy did not end in anything very conclusive although the latter view appears to have been generally accepted. Recent findings at Ketugrām in Burdwan district tends to support another theory, not very much established at the moment, that Chandidās flourished at the latter place and subsequently settled at Nānnoor.

Chhendāpāthār—A remote village in the extreme south of Ranibandh police station, about 12.9 km. (8 miles), as the crow flies, south-east of Jhilimili. It is difficult of access and can be reached by proceeding along Jhilimili-Phulkusmā road for some 11.3 km. (7 miles) and then taking a turn to the right (south) along a country road to Chhendāpāthār about 4.8 km. (3 miles) away. Its population

[1] Sukumar Sen—*Bichitra Sāhitya*, Vol. I.

in 1961 was 200. Chhendāpāthār means, in local dialect, a stone with a hollow in it. An adjacent rivulet with big boulders lying across it gives the impression of the water passing through cavities in the stones—a phenomemon from which the village takes its name. It deserves mention not so much for certain deposits of wolfram in its vicinity, which a commercial firm exploited for some time, as for its associations with the well-known revolutionary, Kshudirām Basu. Financially assisted by Rāicharan Dhabal Deb, the politically-minded zemindar of Ambikānagar, Kshudirām Basu and his associates set up a secret camp deep in the jungles near Chendāpāthār for target practice and manufacture of explosives. A spot amidst dense *sāl* forests showing a depression on the ground surface which could have been a deep excavation long ago, is still pointed out as the dug-out where the band of terrorists experimented with their explosives and weapons. Vestiges of the mud walls of a cottage are also seen nearby. A park has recently been laid out near the village proper to perpetuate the memory of these early freedom fighters.

Deulbhirā—A small but ancient village in Taldangra police station situated at a distance of 9.7 km. (6 miles), as the crow flies, south-east of Taldangra and on the left bank of the Jaypāndā river. In 1961 it had a population of 338 persons. It is connected with Taldangra by a road, 12.9 km. (8 miles) long, mostly metalled, that passes through the well-known clay-modellers' village of Pānchmurā.

The village contains a derelict laterite *sikhara* temple in an advanced stage of dilapidation standing forlorn in the midst of cultivated fields. From stylistic considerations, it bears a close resemblance to the more renowned temples at Sonātopal, Bahulārā and Dihar and may, therefore, be supposed to have been built in the early mediaeval period. At the instance of J. C. French, who, as the Collector of Bankura in the late twenties, used to take a lot of interest in the temples of the district, some Jain images were collected from here which, according to R. D. Banerji, may be taken as the products of *circa* 10th century A.D.

Dharāpāṭ—An ancient village in Vishnupur police station some 8 km. (5 miles) north-west of Vishnupur town and having a population of 757 persons in 1961. Its principal attraction lies in a large *sikhara* temple of Orissan style which, though not protected by the Government, is in a fair state of preservation. It can be reached from Vishnupur by proceeding north along the Vishnupur-Sonamukhi metalled road for about 6.4 km. (4 miles) and then following for about a mile a country road which branches off west from the main road just after it has crossed the Dwarakeswar river. Motor traffic between Vishnupur and Sonamukhi uses the main road in fair weather when the Dwarakeswar is almost dry. The temple is dedicated to

an idol called Syāmchānd Ṭhākur, commonly known as Nengṭā Ṭhākur, founded by one Advesh, a mediaeval Raja of Dharā-pāṭ. The shrine is a neatly plastered laterite structure, about 18.3 metres (60 feet) high and constructed, according to an inscription over the front arch, in 1616 or 1626 Saka corresponding to 1694 or 1704 A.D. The discrepancy about the date is attributable to the mutilation of the third digit of the figure signifying the year of foundation which could be read either as 1 or as 2. According to the well-known mediaeval text *Madanmohan Bandanā* by Ratan Kavirāj, Raja Advesh of Dharāpāṭ appears to have been a vassal of the suzerain Malla Rajas of Vishnupur. Considering the date of the temple, it is most likely that this chieftain was converted to Vaishnavism which was the religion professed at the time by his overlords. It was, therefore, natural for him to set up a fine temple for the worship of the Vaishnava deity Krishna, one of whose various names is Syām-chānd. Other archaeological remains in the village include the vestiges of a large laterite temple, now in complete ruins, and several Jain and Hindu images in stone. The old demolished temple might have been used as a seat of Vishnu worhip before local religious sentiments turned to the worship of Krishna in the exsting temple. That Vishnu once held sway here is corroborated by the fact that an ancient four-armed Vishnu image holding the usual emblems in each hand is embedded intact on the east wall of the shrine. The size of the statue presupposes the existence of a temple which could as well have been the one now in ruins. There is another image of the Jain pontiff Pārswanātha housed in a modern structure nearby, which has since been converted into that of Vishnu by carving out of the back-slab two additional hands holding the traditional emblems. Such forcible transformation of an earlier Jain figure into a Vishnu image would testify to the prevalence of Vishnu worship after the decline of Jain influence in the locality. There are two more Jain images embedded on the north and west faces of the present temple. These are *Digambara* Jain figures indicating that not only Jainism was once entrenched here but that the followers belonged to the *Digambara* sect. It may be assumed from all this evidence that Dharāpāṭ was an important centre of Jainism up to the 12th century when it was taken over as a site for Vishnu worship which, again, yielded place to the worship of Krishna leading to the construction of the present Syāmchānd temple towards the close of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century. From the point of view of social history, Dharāpāṭ is a very important place in the district where successive religious cultures thrived and declined over the ages. With the theft of the idol of Syāmchānd some years ago, the temple has been adandoned as a place of Krishna worship.

Legend relates that Raja Advesh, the founder of the present temple, had no issue and he bestowed his affections on the idol Syāmchānd

as he would do to an offspring of his own. This was why after his death, his obsequies were said to have been performed by the deity itself which miraculously assumed human form for the purpose. Continuing a previous practice, women of the locality still visit the shrine in the hope of being blessed with progeny.

Dihar—A small village (with a population of 392 in 1961) of great antiquarian interest in Vishnupur police station, situated, as the crow flies, 6.4 km. (4 miles) north-east of Vishnupur town and on the left bank of the Dwarakeswar. It can be reached from Vishnupur by proceeding along the Vishnupur-Sonamukhi road for about 6.4 km. (4 miles) and then following for about 4 km. (2½ miles) an unmetalled road branching off east from the main road after it has crossed the Dwarakeswar river, the bed of which remains almost dry in fair weather.

The principal attraction of the village—a celebrated centre of Sivaite worship in the district—lies in the two laterite temples dedicated to Shāḍeswara and Saileswara (locally known as Salleswar), which are variant names of Siva, whose phallic emblems are installed in the shrines. Both the temples have lost their towers now and this lends a stunted look to the edifices; it may be that the structures, if ever completed, had suffered damage in the past leading to their disappearance. It may also be that the towers were never completed. Absence of the super-structures of both the temples renders the task of ascertaining their age as also their architectural evaluation somewhat difficult. But from the decorative elements appearing on the exterior wall surfaces, scholars have concluded that both of them were originally of the *sikhara* type. The temples, as they stand now, do not carry much embellishment although some laterite sculptures can still be seen along the basement mouldings and beneath the cornice projections. R. D. Banerji in his well-known work Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture held that the decorative devices used on the Shāḍeswara were superior to those on the Saileswara shrine. Taking into account all the evidence at his disposal, he ascribed both the temples to the first half of the 11th century A.D. D. B. Spooner, the then Superintendent of Archaeology, Eastern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, who had an opportunity to look into the original documents relating to the genealogy of the Vishnupur Raj family, came to the conclusion, in his annual report for 1910-11, that the temples were built by one Prithvi Malla, king of Vishnupur, in 1346 A.D. Structural peculiarities of the shrines, especially those appearing in the corbelled entrances, also helped him to ascribe the temples approximately to the same date. Subsequent researches have, however, prompted scholars to accept the view of R. D. Banerji which tends to fix the date of the Dihar temples more or less in the period in which the renowned Sonātopal and Bahulāra temples were built. On a recent local inspection by an officer of

the West Bengal District Gazetteers Unit, a laterite sculpture of Krishna holding the flute and standing in the conventional *tri-bhanga* (thrice-bent) pose was noticed on the south wall of the Saileswara temple immediately above the basement mouldings. Since Krishna worship was introduced into the Bankura region long after the 11th century, this figure may prove to be of great interest and may help in throwing further light on the age of this group of temples.

It appears from available evidence that from the 10th-11th centuries temple-building activities were carried on with vigour in many parts of the Bankura district, particularly in the tract lying on the banks of the Dwarakeswar river between Ekteswar in the west and Dihar in the east. Besides the renowned temples at Sonātopal, Bahulārā and Dihar, vestiges of equally ancient temples are still to be seen at Rāutārā, Layer, Dharāpāṭ, Te-deuli and other places along the course of the Dwarkeswar. These sumptuous monuments, built at considerable labour and expense and presupposing a stable local administration, testify to the past prosperity of this area and throw considerable light not only on contemporary religious history, but also on the political and socio-economic life of the region.

Dihar appears to have been a seat of Sivaite worship for no less than 900 years at a stretch. The annual *Gājan* festival celebrated here towards the end of *Chaitra*, the last month of the Bengali year, attracts a large number of pilgrims. Spooner in his annual report for 1910-11, mentioned above, stated that at least 20,000 people visited Dihar on such occasions.

Ekteswar—A village in the Bankura police station having a population of 1,274 in 1961 and situated on the north bank of the Dwarakeswar, 3.2 km. (2 miles) south-east of Bankura town. The place derives its name from that of a *swayambhu lingam* (lit. self-formed phallic emblem of Siva) called Ekteswar whose imposing shrine is one of the most interesting religious edifices in the district. The temple, in its present form, resembles a *piḍhā deul*, the orthodox version of which displays a tiered roof of pyramidal shape. The eloquent incongruity of the stunted super-structure of the shrine in relation to its massive sub-structure warrants the conclusion that the original tower must have been much taller than what it is now and in conformity with the height and dimensions of the sub-structure. It seems likely that the temple has assumed its present form in course of successive restorations of which at least four are on record. The following account of the temple was given by Beglar in the Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII:

"The temple is remarkable in its way; the mouldings of the basement are the boldest and the finest of any I have seen, though quite plain. The temple was built of laterite, but has had sandstone and brick additions made to it since. There are traces of three different restorations or repairs executed to this temple. The first was a

restoration of the upper portion, which had apparently fallen down. In the restoration, the outline of the tower and the general appearance of the temple before its dilapidation appears to have been entirely ignored, and a new design adopted. After this, repairs on a small scale were carried out, of which traces are to be seen in various patchy portions of brick and mortar. Lastly, a series of brick arches were added in front of the temple. . . . Several pieces of sculpture, both broken and sound, and almost all Brahmanical, lie in groups on platforms outside, none of any special interest and none inscribed." Besides the three repairs mentioned by Beglar, the temple underwent another in 1920 when the priests, the custodians of the temple until recently, succeeded in giving it a fairly modern look by liberal application of sand, plaster and garish embellishments. The *nandi* pavilion in front of the temple, another *piḍhā deul* of much smaller dimensions, was dismantled some 24 years ago.

The object of worship in the temple is a piece of stone, shaped more or less like a human foot, installed at the bottom of a well occupying the centre of the sanctum and having a depth of about 2.1 metres (7 feet) from the floor of the cella. It appears that there is a subterranean channel connecting the well with the adjacent Dwarakeswar river through which water is admitted to keep the *liṅgam* partially submerged most of the time. Ekteswar is an important centre of Sivaite worship in the district attracting large numbers of pilgrims throughout the year and especially during the *Sivarātri* and *Gājan* festivals occurring in March and April respectively every year. People suffering from chronic and incurable diseases resort to prolonged fasting in the precincts of the temple and invoke the blessings of the deity for cure of their ailments. Many, according to popular belief, are miraculously healed through divine dispensation.

In spite of several conjectures, the derivation of the term 'Ekteswar' has not perhaps been satisfactorily explained. A legend relates that the kings of Mallabhum and Sāmantabhum once resorted to arms to settle a boundary dispute between their adjacent kingdoms. Siva was mutually accepted as the mediator and he established himself in his present abode on the frontier which, thereafter, marked the boundary between the two domains. Having achieved unity (*ekatā*) between the warring princes in this manner, the divine arbitrator came to be known as *Ekatā-Iswara* or the god who had cemented unity between the belligerent chieftains. Ekteswar appears to be a colloquial abbreviation of the term 'Ekatā-Iswara'. Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyānidhi, however, contended that the name is derived from Ekapādeswara (lit. a god with only one leg) representing a deity mentioned in Vedic literature. His conjecture finds partial support from the shape of the *liṅgam* already described. But curiously, the said Vedic deity appears to have been represented here by the fragment of a foot only and not in its entirety.

Ghutgaryā—A large and prosperous village in the Barjora police station, 4 km. (2½ miles) north-west of Barjora with which it is connected by a metalled road. Of its population of 1,993 persons (according to the 1961 Census), 936 are engaged in rural crafts thereby lending to its economy a strong bias for village industries of which blacksmithy and cutlery manufacture have won some well-deserved renown.

An object of great archaeological interest in the vicinity is a splendid stone temple, about 12.2 metres (40 feet) high and built in the Orissan style, standing some distance outside the village on high ground amidst paddy-fields. There is no *mukhamandapa* in front of the temple which is constructed on the *pancha-ratha panchānga bāḍa* principle with four rampant lions high up on the tower which ends in an *āmalaka* finial capped with the usual *kalasa* and *patākā danda*. All these features are in strict conformity with the later style of temple architecture followed in Orissa. From the evidence of sculptures, placed in panels around the entrance, which depict scenes from the Hindu *Purānas* and especially those connected with the worship of Krishna popularized in Bengal by Chaitanya, it appears that the shrine was built not earlier than the 17th century A.D. The stylistic features, mentioned above, also support this view. There being no inscription on the temple, the particulars of its builder are unknown. There is no deity in the temple at present but from circumstantial evidence it appears that it must have been set up for the worship of Krishna. The place where the temple stands now is locally known as Laskarbāndh, a term arising out of the fact that during the regime of the East India Company, their soldiers or *laskars* used to camp here on the embankment of a tank close by. The temple is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India and is in a good state of preservation although some of the basement slabs appear to have been removed.

Hādal-Nārāyanpur—Usually known by their joint name, Hādal and Nārāyanpur are (or were) actually two adjacent villages in the Patrasayer police station about 6.4 km. (4 miles), as the crow flies, north of the thana headquarters. In 1961, they had a total population of 869 persons. The place is difficult of access but can be reached along a country road, some 3.2 km. (2 miles) long, running north from the Dhagariā railway station on the B. D. R. Railway. Besides the very imposing mansion of the local zemindars—whose family history is narrated in the next paragraph—the village has little to offer to the visitor except a few private temples displaying good terracotta embellishments and an excellent black basalt sculpture of the Pāla period of a deity popularly worshipped as Brahmāni. The image, about 1.4 metres (4½ feet) high, is in a very good state of preservation and shows five *agni-kundas* (fire-pits) at its five corners proving that it really represents Pārvati who legendarily

performed a long penance amidst five fires desiring to have Siva as her husband. It is said that a devout resident of Hādal-Nārāyanpur once saw a vision in a dream, and following it up, recovered the image from the bed of the adjacent Bodāi river and had it installed in a temple where it has been worshipped since. The people of the locality believe that the goddess, if propitiated, prevents fire hazards. The worship of the Hindu goddess Chandi has been fairly widespread in the Bankura district, especially in the past. Brahmāni of Hādal-Nārāyanpur appears to be the same deity in her gentler manifestation.[1]

History of the Mandal family

'Mandal' (lit. a headman) is a titular surname used by the members of the zemindar family of Hādal-Nārāyanpur. It is said that their ancestral home was at Nilpār, a village elsewhere in the district and that they originally belonged to the Ghosh family of that place. One of their ancestors, Muchirām Ghosh, chanced to visit Hādal and being attracted by the fertility of the soil of the locality, decided to settle there around 1693 A.D. At that time, the village formed a part of the Purulia *taraf* under Vishnupur Raj and was administered by Dewan Subhaṅkar Das[2] who happened to live at Barampur, a village near Nārāyanpur. Muchirām came in close contact with Subhaṅkar Das and by dint of his competence and integrity was soon introduced in the court of Vishnupur. The Malla king of the time was so much impressed by his ability that he appointed him as an administrator of certain villages, including Hādal and Nārāyanpur and bestowed on him the title of 'Mandal'. In recognition of his services, Muchirām was also granted extensive rent-free lands which formed the core of the zemindari that the family built up subsequently. In addition to their landed properties, the Mandals also took to indigo plantation thus adding further to their income. It appears that the family, in its days of glory, spent huge sums for construction of roads and temples and excavation of tanks etc. for the benefit of the people living in their estates. Although originally settled at Hādal, the family subsequently shifted to the village Nārāyanpur. With the statutory abolition of zemindari in West Bengal in 1954, the Mandal family of Hādal-Nārāyanpur has ceased to enjoy its previous economic status and many of its members have now taken to learned professions away from their village home.

Hārmāsrā—A prosperous village with a population of 1,582 persons (according to the 1961 Census) in Taldangra police station situated, as the crow flies, 10.5 km. (6½ miles) west of Taldangra. It can be reached by proceeding for 12.1 km. (7½ miles) along a metalled road branching off south-west from the Bankura-Simlapal main road at a point some 8.1 km. (5 miles) north of Taldangra.

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[1] Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay—*Bānkurār Mandir*. Calcutta, 1964. pp. 62-63.

[2] Subhaṅkar Das has already been referred to in Chapter I.

The village, with a literacy rate of 34.4 per cent, has produced many physicians, some of whom practise their profession locally while the rest have migrated to other places. The principal attraction of the village lies in its archaeological remains consisting of a fine laterite *sikhara* temple and a stone image, 1.5 metres (5 feet) high, of the Jain pontiff Pārswanātha. The figure, first noticed by K.N. Dikshit, is carved out of a big block of stone depicting on the back-slab a number of subsidiary divinities around the principal image. Considering its size, it is certain that there was once a temple here to house it, which, from circumstantial evidence, may not be the existing one. In view of the very close similarity of the Hārmāsrā temple with temples No. 1 and 2 at Barākar in Burdwan district, the conclusion becomes inevitable that the former could not have been set up before the 16th century A.D. when Jainism had ceased to be a religious force in this region. It is, therefore, more than likely that the stone image had been set up in a local shrine some time prior to the 13th century when Jainism waned and completely withdrew from this part of the country. It is also generally accepted by scholars that Jainism as a proselytizing force entered Bankura district from its strongholds immediately to the west and it used the courses of the various rivers in its propagation towards the east. According to this theory, it is possible that at an uncertain time prior to the 13th century, a Jain settlement grew up at this place on the north bank of the Silabati flowing into the district from the uplands in the west. The existing Jain image is the only relic left now of such a Jain incursion into this area in the remote past. The fact that the present temple does not house any deity makes it conjectural to associate it with any specific type of worship for which it was originally constructed. The edifice having a height of about 12.2 metres (40 feet) is unpretentious and bears no exterior decoration. It is in the Orissan style with a large *āmalaka* at the top and showing wall projections resembling those in the temples of Orissa. It is not a protected monument and is, consequently, in a lamentable state of preservation. Several blocks of stone have fallen from the top of the tower while big cracks have appeared on the walls. The plinth in the front has also been considerably damaged.[1] An interesting legend told about the shrine is that in days gone by a hermit possessing supernatural powers came and settled in the village. Through his miraculous powers the temple came out of the bowels of the earth in the course of a single night. Unfortunately, before it could come up in its entirety, a cock crowed signifying the advent of dawn when the hermit's powers proved useless. Pointing to the broken portions of the temple, the villagers would say that the mendicant's work was thus left unfinished. The memory of the sadhu is

[1] Ibid pp. 149-51.

still held in high esteem by local people who offer prayers at the shrine. Peculiarly, the priest officiating in such functions comes from the degraded Hāri caste.

Jagannāthpur—A village (with a population of 1,257 persons in 1961) in the Barjora police station situated about 8 km. (5 miles), as the crow flies, south-east of Barjora and approachable along a country road, 6.4 km. (4 miles) long branching off east from the Durgapur-Bankura highway at a point approximately 8 km. (5 miles) south-west of Barjora.

An object of great archaeological interest here is the large stone temple dedicated to Ratneswar Siva. The deity is a very old *lingam* which, according to popular belief, was not installed, by any mortal hand but came up from the bowels of the earth all by itself and has been worshipped since in the temple constructed for it later. Legend has it that long ago, an ascetic of the name of Ratneswar practised prolonged penances here thereby lending his name to the deity and the shrine. No relics on the spot are, however, ascribable to the ascetic. There is no inscription on the temple which, from stylistic and other considerations, appears to be at least 200 years old. It stands to a height of about 12.2 metres (40 feet) and has very massive walls which is proved from the fact that the cella measures no more than 1.8 metres (6 feet) square whereas the outer dimensions at the basement are 6 metres (20 feet) square. Architecturally, the edifice is of the *sikhara* type with an abrupt closing in of the tower near the top which is surmounted by a large voluted *āmalaka*. There is only one door opening on the south facing a modern *nāṭmandapa* which does not appear to have been there when the temple was originally constructed. The walls are covered with plaster and the shrine, although not protected by the Government, is in a good state of preservation because of the *Gājan* festival of Siva annually observed here since a very long time. It attracts a large crowd every year and many of the assembled devotees perform the *bān-phōḍā* rite which consists of piercing the tongue or the skin of the breast or the arms with sharp-pointed iron rods or bamboo sticks. Such self-inflicted corporal mortification has been a traditional practice in some parts of the western districts of the State for pleasing various deities. The *chaḍak* or the hook-swinging rite was another such ritual which has since been banned by law and is no longer observed at Jagannāthpur. It is a peculiar custom that the *bhaktyās* (devotees) who undergo such ordeals are dressed up as dancing girls donning colured saris, tinsel jewellery and garlands of flower while taking part in this ritual. The origin of this custom could not be traced but it works perhaps as a booster to the morale of the suffering devotees and certainly adds colour and vivacity to an otherwise grim ceremony. Siva worship is very widespread in Bankura district and the temple of Ratneswar at Jagannāthpur is an important centre for the observance of a cult

combining in itself discernible strains of non-Aryan and Aryan religious practices which may offer to the anthropologist an interesting field of study.

Jāmkuri—An old village in Patrasayer police station situated, as the crow flies, 6.4 km. (4 miles) south-east of Patrasayer with which it is connected by a country road 12 km. (7½ miles) long. It had a population of 1,184 in 1961. It yielded several small stone images of Jain pontiffs (*Tirthankaras*) and Vishnu, some of which are preserved in the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad museum at Vishnupur. A local group of village artisans, who still prefer to be known as *Sutradharas* (lit. 'holders of the measuring tape', but now carpenters by profession), specialize in manufacturing traditional Durgā *pats* (scroll-paintings) which they peddle in rural fairs or in neighbouring villages. In mediaeval Bengal, the *Sutradharas* not only excelled in carpentry but also used the media or stone, clay and colour for the expression of their talents. The community is very much on the decline now all over West Bengal, particularly in respect of their productions in the latter media, but a small group still survives at Jāmkuri. A collateral branch of the Vishnupur Raj family settled here and their descendants still live in the village. Raja Gopāl Singh, who flourished at Vishnupur in the first half of the 18th century, had two sons, the older of whom succeeded his father while the younger was given the estate at Jāmkuri. Dāmodar Singh, the claimant of the Vishnupur throne at the close of the 18th century, commenced raising fortifications at Jāmkuri which he never completed. The village is also known by the name of Telisāyer.

Jayrāmbāṭi—A well-known village in Kotulpur police station, 9 km. (5½ miles) south-east of Kotulpur with which it is connected by a metalled road 13 km. (8 miles) long. In 1961 it had a population of 517 persons. From Vishnupur, the nearest railway station on the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway, one has to proceed along the Vishnupur-Ārāmbāgh all-weather road up to Kotulpur and then take a branch road to Jayrāmbāṭi. Visitors, journeying in their own transport from Calcutta, find it more convenient to travel up to Baidyabāṭi along the Grand Trunk Road and then turn left and proceed through Tārakeswar to Ārāmbāgh from where a road leads to the village, some 21 km. (13 miles) away, *via* Kāmārpukur.

Jayrāmbāṭi, a remote and unknown village till the close of the last century, came into prominence because of its associations with Sāradāmoni Devi, wife of Sri Rāmakrishna Paramhamsa Deva, the renowned Bengali savant of the 19th century. She was born here in 1853 and was married at an early age to Gadadhar Chattopadhyay who hailed from Kāmārpukur, a village 4.8 km. (3 miles) away and in the western end of the Ārāmbāgh subdivision of Hooghly district. She was a lady of pronounced religious temperament and

it is generally accepted that the greatness of Sri Rāmakrishna largely stemmed from her self-sacrificing devotion to her husband who often described her as the main source of all his spiritual attainments. The Rāmakrishna Mission has built a modern temple here to commemorate her memory in which her marble statue has been installed and is worshipped regularly. The shrine is sacred to all who subscribe to the ideals of the Rāmakrishna Mission and there is a constant flow of visitors from all parts of the country as also from abroad who come to pay homage to a lady of remarkable personality and character representing the very best in Indian womanhood. The Rāmakrishna Mission also runs a charitable dispensary, a Junior High school and a guest house here. A large tank, called *Māyer Dighi (mother's tank) is another object of interest in the village.* Not far from the modern temple built by the Rāmakrishna Mission is the seat of an ancient rural deity, called Simhavāhini, held in great veneration by the local people. It is commonly believed that ordinary clay collected from the mound on which an earlier temple of the goddess stood cures many ailments.

Jhānṭipāhāri—Once an insignificant village, Jhānṭipāhāri, 8 km. (5 miles) north-west of Chhatna and in the same police station, had a population of 2,659 persons in 1961 and is now the second largest rice-milling centre in the district after Bankura town with 21 rice mills which produced, between 1962-63 and 1964-65, an average quantity of 1,57,630 quintals of rice per annum. Most of the rice mills are served with electricity but they vary in size, the capital investments ranging from one to three lakhs of rupees per unit. Besides supplies of paddy received from the neighbouring hinterland within the district, it depends heavily on consignments from Purulia with which it is amply connected by road and rail. The Bankura-*Purulia road passes through Jhānṭipāhari.* There is another all-weather metalled road from Jhānṭipāhāri which skirts Saltora in the north and proceeds to Raghunāthpur in Purulia district. The Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway also passes through this rice-milling centre. Labour has always been cheap here, the average wages being Rs. 1.25 and Re 1.00 per head per day for male and female labour respectively even as late as in 1964. Communication facilities helping the collection of raw materials and the distribution of finished products as also the availability of cheap labour have contributed to Jhānṭipāhāri's growth but the recent ban on the inter-State and inter-district movement of rice and paddy is posing a serious threat to the prosperity of this important commercial centre of the district.

Jhilimili—A village in the extreme south-west corner of the district which can be reached from Ranibandh by an all-weather metalled road passing over a range of low forest-clad hills set amidst picturesque natural scenery. Its distance from Ranibandh is about

24.2 km. (15 miles). This remote and backward hamlet with a population of 622 persons in 1961 was of little consequence until recently, but various welfare measures have lately been introduced here both by the Union and the State Governments transforming it into a model village in the modern sense of the term. The pivotal organization co-ordinating the diverse nation-building activities is the Kalyān Niketan, the premises and buildings of which now cover an area of 34.43 hectares (85 acres). The ideal of this institution is to revitalize rural life on a sound economic and cultural basis for which several subsidiary organizations have been set up which are functioning successfully. A Junior Basic school, two Senior Basic schools for boys and girls and a Multi-purpose High school equipped to teach Humanities, Science and Agriculture meet the educational needs of the local people. A *Vijnān Mandir* has been established by the Government of India for dissemination of popular and practical scientific knowledge in the neighbourhood. A School-cum-Community Centre has also been set up to impart education to the illiterate masses with the main object of fostering community spirit among them. There is also an Area Library rendering valuable service to the local neo-literates as also to sister libraries within the police station. A Youth Hostel provides accommodation to visitors as also to teachers and students attached to the other institutions. Pisciculture is carried on in a big tank named Kalyān Sāyar from which fish is supplied to local consumers. There is also a proposal to set up a bird sanctuary in a well-forested area adjoining a rivulet flowing past the hamlet. The village is located very near the tri-junction of the districts of Bankura, Purulia and Midnapur and is connected already by bus services with the first two districts while a proposal to connect it with the third is now being actively pursued.

Kangsābati Dam—It is a continuous dam over the Kangsābati river and its tributary, the Kumāri, which flow, near the project site, within easy reach of each other. It spans the rivers at a place some 3.2 km. (2 miles) upstream from their point of confluence near the village Ambikānagar in the Ranibandh police station. In its northern portion, it barricades the Kangsābati while its southern part intercepts the Kumāri. The dam takes off from the mauza Mukutmanipur in Khatra police station and after crossing the bed of the Kangsābati river continues its course across the bed of the Kumāri before terminating at the village of Lipidiri in the Ranibandh police station. The overall length of the dam from Mukutmanipur to Lipidiri, including its earthen portions which cover three-fourths of the total distance, is 10.08 km. (6.26 miles). The maximum height of the dam over the Kangsābati river is 39.6 metres (130 feet) and that over the Kumāri will be 41.1 metres (135 feet). The average width of the pathway running along the crest of the dam will be 12.2 metres (40 feet) and the maximum width of the base at ground level will be 213.4

metres (700 feet). Although work connected with the Kaṅgsābati portion of the dam is more or less finished, the whole project is not expected to be completed before 1970.

The reservoir formed by the dam will, in reality, be two adjacent lakes mingling with each other, there being no natural or man-made barrier of any consequence between them. It will cover 37.8 sq. km. (23.6 sq. miles) of land surface in the western parts of Khatra and Ranibandh police stations of Bankura district and another 43.2 sq. km. (27 sq. miles) in Mānbāzār police station of Purulia district. The problem of providing alternative accommodation to nearly 25,000 people who will be displaced by the formation of the reservoir has been energetically tackled and rehabilitation facilities have already been offered to them in 20 villages in the Garbetā police station of Midnapur district.

The storage capacity of the composite reservoir will be 0.92 million acre-feet which will be sufficient to irrigate, during the *kharif* and *rabi* seasons, 3,24,000 hectares (8,00,000 acres) and 60,750 hectares (1,50,000 acres) of land respectively spread over the southern parts of Bankura district, the northern portion of Midnapur district and the Goghāṭ police station of Hooghly district. The project is aimed to serve the dual purpose of irrigation and flood control with land reclamation and soil conservation as its subsidiary objectives.

The Irrigation Department of the Government of West Bengal formulated the project in 1952 when the preliminary survey began. The construction of the dam started from the middle of 1956 and its foundation stone was laid in January 1959. The work is still in progress and the whole project is likely to cost Rs. 30 crores or more.

The Kaṅgsābati administration maintains a fine Inspection Bungalow perched on a hillock at Mukuṭmanipur overlooking the dam and the reservoir which offers a particularly panoramic view all around.

Kenjākurā—A big village in the Bankura police station with a population of 2,162 in 1961 lying west-northwest of Bankura town with which it is connected by road, some 19.3 km. (12 miles) in length, passing through Chhatna. It is an important centre of bell-metal and handloom weaving industries. The bell-metal artisans, numbering about 350, usually manufacture domestic utensils worth about Rs. 2,62,000 per year. The demand, however, is on the decline because of competition from goods made of aluminium or similar cheap substitutes. The craftsmen were so long very much under the economic domination of the local *mahājans*. But a co-operative society with 165 bell-metal workers as members was formed in 1964-65. There is another co-operative society of handloom weavers who number about 600 and produce annually goods valued at Rs. 7,20,000 approximately. The bell-metal and handloom products

of Kenjākurā are sent initially to Bankura town where they are partly consumed and partly exported to other places.

Kohārpur—The principal village in the Kohārpur mauza (J.L. No. 192) of Kotulpur police station having a population of 1,648 persons in 1961 and approximately 9 km. (5½ miles) due south of Kotulpur. An unmetalled road from the village meets the Bankura-Jayrāmbāṭi-Ārāmbāgh all-weather metalled road 3.2 km. (2 miles) away, near Jayrāmbāṭi, about 11.3 km. (7 miles) south-east of Kotulpur. The main attraction of the village is the solidly built laterite temple of Sāntināthа Siva, a *sikhara* structure about 12.2 metres (40 feet) high with a *piḍhā mandapa* (i.e. a porch with a tiered tapering roof) in front. From stylistic considerations, the shrine appears to have been built in or about the 17th century. The deity is held in high esteem in the neighbourhood and the *Gājan* festival occurring at the end of *Chaitra* (middle of April) attracts a large number of pilgrims every year. A legend, common to many Sivaite shrines in India, is also told about this temple. In the remote past, local milkmen noticed some of their milch cows straying from the herds and shedding milk from their udders at a secluded place in a dense forest. Enquiries revealed the existence of a *swayambhu liṅgam* (a self-evolved phallic emblem of Siva) at the spot. The present temple, constructed later, now houses the deity. As a mark of deference to the local milkmen, whose ancestors discovered the *liṅgam*, the opening ceremonies of the annual *Gājan* festival are still performed by members of that caste.

Kotulpur—A large and prosperous village—the headquarters of the police station of the same name—situated on the Vishnupur-Ārāmbāgh metalled road, 32.2 km. (20 miles) east of Vishnupur town. It had a population of 2,499 persons according to the 1961 Census.

The village is supposed to have derived its name from its associations with Qutlu Khān (Qutlu Lohāni Dāud), the Pathan opponent to the extension of Mughal power in this part of the country in the latter half of the 16th century. A mound near the village is pointed out as the remains of the fort of the Pathan chieftain. Others prefer to identify it with Kutuhalapura mentioned in the *Desābalibibriti*, a 17th century text written by one Jaganmohan Pundit, in which informations about certain places in Bankura district were added in the middle of the 18th century by a later chronicler of unknown identity. The *Desābalibibriti* mentions Kutuhalapura as a place situated 'two *yojanas*' or 45 km. (28 miles) east of Vishnupur, the capital of the Malla Rajas, and thus appears to correspond to modern Kotulpur.

The village contains a number of temples, the most prominent of which is the shrine of Sāntināthа Siva standing in the market place. Two brick temples in the Bhadrapārā locality offer excellent specimens

of terracotta embellishments while another small brick temple in the Hālderpārā locality displays stone sculptures of good workmanship. Most of these shrines were set up by certain Gandhabanik families belonging to a trading caste which flourished here in the 18th and 19th centuries.

A group of hereditary artisans living in the village is still engaged in the production of necklaces made of wooden beads, known as *tulasi-mālā*, which are in great demand amongst devout Vaishnavas and are sold in sizable quantities in and outside the district.

History of the Bhadra family

One of the oldest zemindar families of the district, the Bhadras of Kotulpur had their original home at the village of Marāl in Burdwan district wherefrom Sadārām Bhadra migrated to Kotulpur and settled there towards the close of the 17th century. The family became rich as merchants in salt, cotton and mustard seeds, but subsequently its members acquired extensive landed property and settled down as zemindars. This was at the time of Ṭhākurdās Bhadra and Gobindarām Bhadra. Soon after, the family divided itself into two equally important sub-families popularly known as the 'Bara-Bhadras' and the 'Chhoṭa-Bhadras' signifying the collateral branches enjoying the bigger and the smaller shares of the properties respectively. During the time of Bhairabchandra Bhadra of the senior branch and Rāmdayāl Bhadra of the junior branch, the family had established itself as the foremost patrons of arts, letters, religion and social services in the neighbourhood so much so that it is said that the administration of justice in the locality also passed into their hands. Besides setting up a number of temples dedicated to Krishna, Vishnu, Siva and Chandi, the members of the family also patronized local festivals like the *Rathayātrā*, the *Jhulanyātrā*, the *Durgāmelā*, the *Rāsmelā* etc. and built lodging houses for visiting pilgrims. The Bhadras were also responsible for construction of roads, tanks, gardens and educational institutions in the Kotulpur area. With the abolition of the zemindari system, the fortunes of the family have dwindled although the temples built by them still stand and the religious festivals started at their instance still continue, though on a much smaller scale.

Lokpur—A village on the eastern boundary of Joypur police station in Vishnupur subdivision, approachable by an unmetalled road 3.2 km. (2 miles) long branching off north from the Vishnupur-Kotulpur highway at a point some 8 km. (5 miles) east of Joypur. In 1961 it had a population of 336 persons. It contains the tomb of a saint held in high religious esteem by the Muslims of the locality who offer prayers there. The remains of the saint lie buried under an earthen grave inside a structure with a stone facade which may have been constructed out of the spoils of earlier buildings. The surmise is corroborated by the fact that the plinth of an older stone edifice up to the ground level is still visible near by. There is also

an ancient tank of fairly large dimensions at the rear of the saint's tomb. O'Malley, in the old Bankura District Gazetteer (1908), mentioned the following legend about this shrine: "Many generations ago a saint named Ismail Ghāzi, who was a notable champion of Islām, warred against the Hindu Rājā of Garh Mandāran and was killed in battle. His head was removed miraculously, but a single drop of blood dropped on the spot where the shrine now stands. The latter is built of stone, and is said to have been erected in the course of a single night. The shrine is in charge of a family of local *fakirs*, some revenue-free lands being assigned for its maintenance. In the adjoining district of Hooghly there is a legend that Shāh Ismail Ghāzi invaded Orissa with success and was falsely accused by a Hindu of attempting to set up an independent kingdom at Mandāran. He was called to Gaur and there beheaded by the order of Husain Shāh. The headless trunk straightway mounted a horse which stood near, and rode off to Mandāran, where it was buried. It seems at least an historical fact that Ismail was a general of Husain Shāh, who invaded Orissa in the beginning of the 16th century, gained a victory over the Orissan army, and then returned to Mandāran (the modern Bhitargarh in the Hooghly district), where he built a fort in which he lies buried."[1]

Māliārā—A large and prosperous village in Barjora police station 8 km. (5 miles) north-west of Barjora with which it is connected by a metalled road which forms a part of the cross-country highway passing through Māliārā and carrying most of the through traffic from Durgapur to Purulia, Ranchi and destinations further west. The village had a population of 5,884 persons and a literacy rate of 36 per cent according to the Census of 1961. There is a very old charitable dispensary, a Post Office and a Multi-purpose Higher Secondary school here.

The Ādhuryya family

A leading zemindar family of the district, resident in this village, traces its origin to the Kānyakubja (Kanauj) Brahmins, one of whom, Deo Ādhuryya, accompanied Man Singh, the celebrated general of Akbar, on his expedition to Orissa, but instead of returning to his country settled at Māliārā towards the close of the 16th century. He rid the neighbouring country of robbers, brought the land under cultivation and received, as a reward for his prowess and pioneering activities, the settlement of taluk Māliārā from the Mughal Subhadar at Dacca together with the title of Raja. Deo Ādhuryya also secured the favours of the Malla Rajas of Vishnupur and it appears that his territory extended to the Damodar on the north and the Sāhārjorā area on the south and east. His successor, Bāsudev Ādhuryya, constructed a stone temple with nine towers, the details of which are given in a following paragraph. According to the family records,

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—op. cit. p. 171.

the third of the line had a quarrel with the Vishnupur Raj in course of which he was treacherously killed after several battles and his son, Gopāl Dās Ādhuryya, was compelled to pay revenue to the overlords of Vishnupur. The Malla chronicles, however, mention of his death in open battle after Bir Singh of the Malla line had invaded his territory as a measure of punishment for his oppression of the people. At the time of the decennial settlement, Jay Singh received the settlement of the zemindari from the British Government. Amar and Dāmodar, later descendants of the family, contributed to many public works in the vicinity like the Māliārā-Barjorā road, the local charitable dispensary, the village school etc. After Dāmodar's death, his son, Brajendra, succeeded him and from his time the law of primogeniture prevailed in the family. His son, Rājnārāyan Chandrādhuryya converted the old school into a High English school and made various grants to it.

The Chatterjee family

The ancestors of the Chatterjees, another illustrious family of Māliārā, migrated to this village from the Hooghly district some seven generations ago. Mention may be made of two scions of this family—late Justice Digambar Chatterjee and his grandson Justice Purushottam Chatterjee—both judges of the Calcutta High Court.

The only object of archaeological interest in the village is a dilapidated stone temple, now standing in the precincts of the local R. N. H. School, which was built by Bāsudev Ādhuryya in the first part of the 17th century. The towers have fallen down and the central structure up to an approximate height of 4.5 metres (15 feet) is all that now remains. The stone slabs used in this edifice are of unusually large size and appear to be of a texture better than that in most of the laterite temples in Bankura. Some sculptured panels are still to be seen on the southern face of the broken shrine. A closer examination of the ruins reveals that there was once a narrow covered corridor running round the central sanctum—an architectural feature not very common in Bankura temples. There is no deity in the temple now and the local people are ignorant of the nature of the idol that must have once been installed here.

Maynāpur—A large and ancient village in Joypur police station having a population of 2,797 persons in 1961 and situated off the Vishnupur-Ārāmbāgh road 6.4 km. (4 miles) south-east of Joypur with which it is connected by a motorable road.

Supposed associations of Maynāpur with Lāusen of *Dharmamangal* fame and with Rāmāi Pundit, who first codified the rituals connected with *Dharma* worship, have led to a controversy regarding the identity of Maynāgarh, the capital of Lāusen. Some scholars think that Maynāpur was the birth-place as also the capital of Lāusen and his father Karnasen, while others are inclined to identify Maynāgarh with Maynānagar near Tamluk in Midnapur district. Rāmāi Pundit, however, is known to have been born in this village.

Maynāpur preserves a number of old archaeological relics which testify to its pre-eminence as a social and religious centre in mediaeval Bengal. As can only be expected from its associations with Lāusen and Rāmāi Pundit, Maynāpur is still a very important centre of *Dharma* worship and the deity, known by the name of Jātrāsiddhi Rāy, is housed in a simple modern structure which is shared by several other godheads including Bāsuli, Chandi and other *Dharma-silās* that find shelter here having been abandoned at their original places of worship. The temple is in the custody of a family belonging to the Dom caste which claims its descent from Rāmāi Pundit himself. A spot near the shrine is pointed out as the grave of Rāmāi Pundit where a damaged stone image of the Sun-god stands amidst other objects of veneration. As is very characteristic of the religious history of Bankura during the middle ages, *Saiva* and *Sākta* cults also appear to have flourished in the same village. Of the Sivaite shrines, the most remarkable is the *Hākanda* temple standing on the bank of a tank called *Hākanda-dighi*. It is a laterite *sikhara* temple of straight contour. It had once a *pidhā mandapa* in front which has since fallen down leaving some fragments of the basement mouldings only. The temple, apparently of a fairly ancient origin, offers some notable architectural features. Near by is the *Kailāsa* shrine, a Sivaite seat, which is an ordinary hall housing a large number of well-executed clay images representing various gods and goddesses. Certain vestiges of the *Tāntrik* form of *Sakti* worship are also noticeable in the village. Maynāpur did not yield any Jain remains but the claim that one or two Buddha figures were discovered from here is interesting. The *Hākanda* tank is held in great religious esteem by the people of the neighbourhood who consider its waters as holy as those of the Ganges. Legend has it that queen Ranjābati, mother of Lāusen, praying for a son, practised severe austerities on its bank to invoke the blessings of *Dharma* resulting in her death. *Dharma*, moved by her unique devotion, appeared before her and having restored her to life, fulfilled her desire.

Pākhannā (Pokharan, Pokharnā or Pushkaranā)—A fairly large village, with a population of about 1,500, in Barjora police station, 9.7 km. (6 miles) due east, as the crow flies, from Barjora with which it is connected by road. It has a hospital, a dispensary and two Primary schools.

The importance of the village lies in its archaeological antiquity. It has now been sufficiently established that it was the capital city of king Chandravarman of the 4th century who is associated with the famous Susuniā inscription, already examined in the chapter on History. K. N. Dikshit, in his monograph on the identification of Pushkaranā, published in the Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1927-28 stated: "At a distance of less than 25 miles (40.3 km.) to the north-east of Susunia is an ancient village named

Pokharan on the south bank of the river Damodar. It is still a considerably large village and its antiquity is attested by the fact that the houses in several quarters of the village are built on the top of mounds, formed by the ruined heaps of older habitations. . . . In the western extremity of the village, exists a large mound called the 'Rajgarh' strewn over with broken bricks, pottery pieces and other antiquities. Several architectural stones are to be seen in the village. . . . There are several small tanks in the vicinity of a large tank (*pokhar* or *pushkara*) in the west of the village and the name Pokharan or Pushkarana must doubtless be ultimately due to the presence of such a tank in ancient times. It is likely that the place dates back from the early Gupta period and can thus be considered to be the Pushkarana of the Susunia inscription, the capital of king Chandravarman, son of Simhavarman, the extent of whose dominions may have been more or less coterminous with the ancient Rāḍha country of south-west Bengal." The antiquities ascribable to king Chandravarman now lie buried under mounds which, when excavated, may yield further interesting materials.

Recent excavations conducted at Pākhannā by the Asutosh Museum of the University of Calcutta tend to confirm the relatively new belief that the site is traceable to the pre-Mauryan period and beyond. The finds include punch-marked copper coins which were prevalent between the second and fifth century B. C. This belief first gained ground when some years ago Suniti Kumar Chatterjee collected a beautiful terracotta *yakshini* figurine possibly of the Maurya or Suṅga period from the Pākhannā site and presented it to the Asutosh Museum. Previous to this the site was associated only with the Gupta period. From the find of a plaque containing a Vishnu figure, done in the well-known Pāla idiom of the 8th century, it can be presumed that the site had remained under organized human habitation as recently as the early Pāla period. The recent excavations have resulted in acquisition by the Asutosh Museum of punch-marked coins, cast-copper coins, early pottery, beads and terracotta figurines, one of which is of a dancing male *yaksha* of the 1st century B. C. The jewellery and head-dress of the *yaksha* are fashioned after typical Suṅga manner.

At a much later date, some 150 years from now, one Raja Rāmtanu Roy, supposed to be a cousin of Raja Rammohun Roy, married into the local Mukherjee family of zemindars and came to live at Pākhannā. He constructed a palace and excavated several tanks, the remains of which are still to be seen here.

Pānchāl—A large village (with a population of 1,969 in 1961) in the Sonamukhi police station of Vishnupur subdivision situated some 13 km. (8 miles), as the crow flies, south-east of Beliātore with which it is connected by road. The easiest way to reach it is to proceed along the Beliātore-Sonamukhi asphalt road for about

a mile and then follow the country road branching off right and leading to the village about 13 km. (8 miles) away.

Pānchāl's claim to eminence rests on its Siva temple which, though small in size, is held in great veneration by the people of the neighbourhood. It is built of brick in the *āṭ-chālā* style of Bengali temple architecture and the deity housed in it, a *liṅgam*, is one of the most renowned of its kind in the district. The shrine attracts a steady stream of visitors throughout the year but thousands gather on the occasion of the annual *Gājan* festival held towards the close of the Bengali year corresponding to the middle of April. Siva worship in Bankura combines in itself pronounced tribal strains resulting from the fact that a sizable proportion of the population of the district is of aboriginal descent. Santal men and women collect on this occasion in large numbers and beguile themselves with their group dances and music. Others, mostly Hindus, observe the gruesome rites locally known as *bāṅ-phōḍā* (piercing the tongue or the skin of the arms or chest with sharp-pointed iron rods or bamboo sticks) and *āgun-sannyās* (walking bare-footed on live charcoal). There is reason to believe that *Chaḍak* or the hook swinging festival was once practised at this centre. The rite is now banned by law and an intending devotee is, therefore, tied with a piece of cloth to one end of a horizontal pole which, with the help of a piece of rope hanging from the other, is made to rotate with the suspended votary around a fulcrum formed by the tip of a stout vertical post.

Pānchmurā—A village in the Taldangra police station, about 8 km. (5 miles), as the crow flies, south-east of Taldangra with which it is connected by a metalled road nearly 13 km. (8 miles) long that traverses difficult undulated terrain and crosses a small unbridged stream midway. The village can also be approached from Vishnupur, some 21 km. (13 miles) to the north-east, and the bus journey along this route is likely to be more comfortable.

According to the Census of 1961, the village has a population of 1,612 persons, about one-sixth of whom are engaged in cotton weaving and clay-modelling industries. Agricultural pursuits, employing 253 persons, account for the largest single group of local workers. The textile products of Pānchmurā are of mediocre quality but some of its burnt-clay articles now enjoy a reputation which may be truly called international. The fame of the commonly known 'Bankura Horse', a terracotta folk-art object, produced exclusively by the artisans of this village, has, in course of the last decade and a half, reached many parts of the globe. The 'Bankura Horse' has now come to be regarded as a symbol of the artistic excellence of Indian rural handicrafts—a fact which finds confirmation in its use as the official crest-motif of the All India Handicrafts Board.

The employment potential of the terracotta industry of Pānchmurā

is not large; there are only 25 units working in the village which manufacture, besides the horses, similar clay models of elephants and tigers as also various clay devices (some of which are very elaborate indeed) for the worship of the serpent-goddess Manasā as also common household utensils. From the point of view of qualitative renown, however, the clay-modelling industry of Pānchmurā is at the centre of the economic activity of the village. A co-operative society has recently been formed to look after the credit and marketing facilities required by the artisans, all of whom belong to the Kumbhakar caste. The society has acquired a plot of land from where clay of the requisite quality is extracted and distributed to its members. Most of the orders for terracotta products come from Government and quasi-Government sources like the All India Handicrafts Board, the West Bengal Small Industries Corporation and the various sales emporia under the Central and the State Governments. Some of these agencies export quantities of 'Bankura Horse' to foreign markets in the U.S.A., the U.K., the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, France and Canada and thereby earn a sizable foreign exchange. The difficulty in transporting the brittle terracotta objects from this remote village to distant markets in the country or abroad is the chief bottleneck affecting further prosperity of this excellent rural craft. The long-necked and pot-bellied 'Pānchmurā Horse' is made hollow with small circular vents here and there to facilitate uniform firing in the country kilns. The various limbs are first turned out separately on the potter's wheel and allowed to dry in the sun for a day or two before they are joined up by hand with additional coatings of soft clay. The leaf-like ears and the tails are cast in moulds and are separately inserted in grooves left for the purpose. The horses as also the elephants and the tigers are turned out in two different shades; the normal burnt-clay colour is obtained by keeping the vents of the kiln open at the time of firing and the black colour is achieved by closing them so that the smoke generated inside the kiln by burning straw does not find a way of escape. Slips of these two colours are used only occasionally on the finished products. As is the universal practice all over India in the field of cottage industries, the women and children of the artisans' families also participate in the production engaging themselves in such spheres of processing as suit their temperament and abilities.

The original function of these terracotta horses was a ritualistic one. Everywhere in the Rāḍh country terracotta horses and elephants of various shapes and sizes have been used from times immemorial as votive objects. People offer them as tokens of their devotion to Dharma Ṭhākur, Manasā and numerous other local divinities known by the generic name of *grām devatās* or village deities. Such offerings are also made on the tombs of Muslim

saints whose worshippers do not necessarily belong to the Muslim community alone. Although rural people belonging to all castes and creeds indulge in this practice, its hold is stronger on the so-called depressed classes. The recent fancy for the 'Pānchmurā Horse' among sophisticated people in urban areas and in foreign countries is attributable to its new appraisal as an excellent craft object depicting the very best in the traditional folk art of rural West Bengal.

An unusual thing for a village as remote and as sparsely populated as Pānchmurā has been the setting up of a degree college which was founded in 1965 at the instance of a local Muslim businessman greatly devoted to the cause of spreading education in the neighbourhood. There is also a Government institution here which rears disease-free cocoons and distributes them to Vishnupur and other silk-weaving centres.

Paresnāth—An ancient site of great antiquarian interest in the Ranibandh police station situated on the north bank of the Kumāri river, 7 km. (4½ miles) north-west of Ranibandh and about 4 km. (2½ miles) west of Ambikānagar with which it is connected by a jeepable country road that crosses the Kumāri over a causeway.

The antiquity of the place can be traced back to pre-historic times on the basis of palaeolithic and neolithic artefacts discovered here. The convenient location of the settlement in between the Kaṅgsābati and the Kumāri rivers which, in days gone by, were no doubt used for the propagation of civilization from the west into the forest-bound confines in the neighbourhood, and its close proximity to the border of the Mānbhum district, an ancient seat of Jain faith, exposed it to the influence of Jainism which converted it into one of its most important strongholds in the district. But in course of time its influence waned and orthodox Hinduism, assisted by such variations of it as were born of its fusion with local aboriginal religious practices, replaced it completely by the 12th-13th centuries A.D. Traces of the Jain faith, once entrenched at Paresnāth, survive to this day in several Jain stone figures including a large image of Pārswanātha, the last of the 24 Jain *tirthaṅkaras*, as also in the name of the village which seems to have been derived from the name of the same Jain pontiff. The site also yielded a number of Jain and Hindu images some of which are now in the custody of the Archaeological Survey of India. Remains of two brick-built temples still lie *in situ* which, according to the Archaeological Survey, may be ascribed to the 12th or the 13th century. The site is now under the protection of the Archaeological Survey but it is likely to be completely submerged by the Kaṅgsābati reservoir in the course of a few years.

Pātrasāyer—Headquarters of the police station of the same name in Vishnupur subdivision, some 29 km. (18 miles), as the crow flies, north-east of Vishnupur town with which it is connected by a road

negotiable only during the fair weather. In the monsoon months, one travelling from Vishnupur has to make a long detour *via* Bankura town, Beliātore and Sonamukhi to reach the isolated place which, nonetheless, with a population of 6,582 according to the 1961 Census, happens to be one of the biggest non-municipal towns in the district. There is a fair concentration of upper caste Hindus here, but the Bauri, Bagdi, Hari, Muchi, Kaibarta and Dhibar classes constitute the majority of the local population. They are mostly employed as agricultural labour and are very poor.

Legend has it that the neighbouring region was once ruled by one Daman Singh, supposed to be a scion of the Malla royal family of Vishnupur, ruins of whose fort can still be seen at a place called Dumnigarh, 9.7 km. (6 miles) west of Pātrasāyer along an unmetalled road. This place has been identified with Korāsurgarh, dealt with elsewhere in this chapter. The most important object of archaeological interest at Pātrasāyer is the Kālanjaya Siva temple, a *sikhara* structure said to have been built by Raja Chaitanya Singh of Vishnupur, which is held in great religious esteem by the local people who flock in their thousands to its precincts during the annual *Gājan* festival held towards the middle of April every year. Other edifices comprise a damaged laterite Raghunāth temple, a Vishnu temple and 10 *sikhara* temples. Passing references may be made of objects of archaeological interest in the vicinity, namely the ruined laterite temple of Brindābanchandra at Birsingha built in 944 Mallāvda (1637 A.D.), the brick temple of Rājeswari at Jāmkundi, the Sarbamaṅgalā temple at Narichā which attracts some 15,000 people every year during the *Makar Saṁkrānti* fair, the Deuleswar temple at Deulpārā which is the venue of the annual *Gājan* festival attended by about 10,000 pilgrims each year, a number of decorated brick temples at Krishnanagar and the Bhagabati shrine at Sālkhārā where an annual fair is held on the *Chaitra Saṁkrānti* day.

Pātrasāyer appears to have been once an important centre for copying Bengali manuscripts. A large number of such documents preserved in the archives of the Asiatic Society of Bengal testify that they were copied by scribes residing in this village.

History of the Hāzrā family

The Hāzrās, an important family of zemindars in the district, originally migrated from Vikrampur in Dacca district (now in East Pakistan) where they enjoyed the title of Chakraborty. Four brothers named Nandarām, Sāhebrām, Giridhari and Harishchandra came to Vishnupur during the reign of the Malla king Chaitanya Singh and were employed in different branches of administration. Nandarām entered the army and was promoted to the rank of a captain in charge of one thousand (*hāzār*) troops and his professional status, it is said, led the family to assume the title to Hāzrā. After retiring from service under the Malla Raj, the four brothers settled at Pātrasāyer and bought up a large zemindari with the money

they had accumulated. It is said that on one occasion, the East India Company instituted a suit against them which they eventually won and were permitted to retain possession over some 14,000 bighas of rent-free land. The family also engaged itself in business in coal, indigo, wood etc. which added to the wealth derived from the vast landed property. During the freedom struggle, some members of this family participated in the non-cooperation movement. It is now in reduced circumstances due to the abolition of zemindari in West Bengal.

Rāipur—Headquarters of the police station of the same name occupying the extreme south-east corner of the district. It can be reached from the district town by proceeding up to the southern bank of the Kaṅgsābati river along the Bankura-Khatra-Ranibandh highway and then taking a turn to the left along a metalled road leading to Rāipur some 21 km. (13 miles) away. A more convenient route lies *via* Taldangra and Simlapal terminating on the northern bank of the Kaṅgsābati on which there is no bridge at the point of crossing but the river here is negotiable by motor traffic during fair weather. Being a thana headquarters, Rāipur has the usual complement of Government offices and educational institutions. In 1961 it had a population of 2,480 persons.

History of the Rāipur Raj family

This remote hamlet has been the seat of an important zemindar family of the district. Legend has it that its founder was a Chauhān Rajpoot, who hailed from Rajasthan during the Mughal period, subdued lawlessness in the neighbourhood and assumed the title of Sikhara Raja. The last ruler of the line, having lost the commander of his armed forces, Mīran Sāhā, in a pitched battle with the Marathas, committed suicide, so the legend goes, by jumping with his wife and children into a tank called Sikharsāyar. To this day, a large deep tank to the south of an old fortification called Sikhargarh, which contained the palaces of the Sikhara Raja, is to be seen along with ruins of buildings and temples within the fortified area. On the western bank of the tank is the tomb of Mīran Sāhā, who, with the passage of time, has come to be regarded as a saint and vows are offered at his grave. The priest of the last Sikhara Raja is said to have succeeded him on his death and lived in a village called Gurupārā near Rāipur but the estate was eventually usurped by Fateh Singh, the younger brother of Raja Krishna Singh of Vishnupur, who had been expelled from the Malla capital and had taken shelter with the Raja of Barābhum. Fateh Singh overpowered the last Raja of the priestly line, settled at Rāipur and was granted a *sanad* by the Nawab of Murshidabad. The family faced the usual vicissitudes experienced by the landed aristocracy of Bengal and appears to have been in distress at the beginning of the present century inasmuch as O'Malley stated in his Bankura District Gazetteer (1908) that "the zamindari is involved in debt, and is

now let out on *ijārā* to Messrs. Gisborne & Co. in satisfaction of debts." In their palmy days as also when their fortunes were on the wane, the members of the family have always been noted as patrons of learning and music. Many *tols* or Sanskrit schools were run in the neighbourhood through their munificence and musicians received encouragement at their courts. Agriculture also attracted their attention and the Jamunā-bāndh, one of the many irrigation tanks which they excavated, still irrigates a large tract of land in the Rāipur police station. A temple dedicated to the goddess Mahāmāyā was built by them long ago but it has since fallen to ruins. The present flat-roofed structure in which the deity is housed is a modern building standing by a tank called Sākhāriyā about which a legend is told similar to that mentioned in the article on Chhatna. The goddess Mahāmāyā once assumed the form of a beautiful little girl, obtained on the bank of this tank a pair of conch-shell bracelets from a *sākhāri* and requested him to get the payment from her father, a local Brahmin. On being approached by the bangle-seller, the Brahmin, who had no daughter, hurried to the tank and saw the miraculous sight of a pair of hands, with the conch-shell bracelets on them, rise above the water only to disappear in a moment. That night the goddess appeared before the Brahmin in a dream and asked him to go to the tank early next morning and collect a piece of stone lying there on which her image would appear. The Brahmin did so and installed the image in a temple near the tank which is visited by a large number of devotees throughout the year.

Rājgrām—A prosperous village in the Joypur police station having a population of 1,263 persons in 1961 and situated about 5 km. (3 miles) east of Joypur. A motorable country road connects it with the Vishnupur-Arambagh highway. The principal attraction of the village lies in its temples some of which present novel architectural features and interesting decorative devices. They were built in the first quarter of the 19th century by a member of the local Rāhā family whose palatial country seat might interest students of secular architecture.

The most significant of the temples of Rājgrām is the shrine of Giri Gobardhana where the family deity of the Rāhās—a *sālagrām-silā* symbolizing Vishnu—is ceremonially carried and installed on the occasion of the Gobardhana puja festival which commemorates an exploit of Krishna who, according to Bhāgavata legends, once mercifully lifted with the little finger of his hand the Giri Gobardhana mountain on which were sheltered the residents of Gokul who thus avoided the disastrous downpour caused by the wrath of Indra. The basic conception of the building is that of an *āt-chālā* temple but the entire outer surface of the superstructure is rendered irregular by liberal use of semi-circular masonry mouldings of variant

forms designed to represent the boulders on the Gobardhana hill. The walls of the edifice are decorated with bold stucco devices and terracotta figures of humans and animals, the latter being very naturalistic in execution representing a late style of temple terracotta art of Bengal.

The shrine in which Vishnu is housed for most of the year is a laterite structure with two storeys, the sanctum being on the upper storey. The outer walls of this flat-roofed structure are severely plain but the ceiling of the porch of the sanctum contains painted murals depicting various motifs and designs. There is perhaps no other temple in the district which displays temple embellishment of this kind. The seventeen-towered octagonal *Rās-mancha*, standing to the east of the Giri Gobardhana shrine, is one of the rare specimens of *saptadasa-ratna* (seventeen-towered) temples in Bengal.

Rānibāndh—The headquarters of the police station of same name at the south-west corner of the district. In 1961 it had a population of 778 persons. It is 61 km. (38 miles) south-west of Bankura town with which it is connected by an asphalt road passing through Indpur and Khatra and over a low causeway across the Kaṅgsābati river. From June-July to November-December each year, the high seasonal flow of the Kaṅgsābati submerges the causeway disrupting direct traffic between its north and south banks along this road. With the commissioning, in the near future, of the Kaṅgsābati Dam, 9.7 km. (6 miles) upstream, the river will lose much of its turbulence when a vented causeway between Kechendāghāṭ on the north bank and Sindurpur on the south, may ensure through traffic all the year round and thus meet a very pressing local demand.

The village takes its name from that of an irrigation tank situated at its centre and claiming some antiquity. The place enjoys a bracing climate and very fine natural scenery. From the local dak bungalow under the Forest Department, perched on a hillock, a very charming view of the neighbouring countryside, interspersed with forest-clad hills and green undulating meadows, can be obtained. O'Malley, in the old Bankura District Gazetteer, was full of praise about the scenic grandeur of the south-western parts of Bankura district. He wrote : "A traveller suddenly brought here might almost imagine himself transported to some English park. . . . In the western and southern portions of the district, the country is more broken and the scenery more picturesque, as the upland ridges are succeeded by low forest-clad hills and wooden glens in the south."

There are a Junior Basic school for boys, a Senior Basic school for girls, a Multi-purpose High school and a recreation hall here with a seating capacity for about 2,000 people. The Block Information Centre as also the Block Children's Park render valuable service to the local community. There are also a Primary Health Centre with 40 indoor beds and 3 attending Medical Officers and

a Sub-Post Office. The Bhārat Sevāsram Saṅgha, the well-known philanthropic organization, runs a branch here which is accommodated in several buildings of its own, housing a charitable dispensary, a library and a hostel for students of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Another hostel run by the Government of West Bengal, provides shelter to 20 students of the Junior Basic school belonging to the Kheria community which was so long branded as a criminal tribe.

The Kaṅgsābati project, when completed, will benefit large tracts of cultivable land within Ranibandh police station. The construction of a subsidiary dam and canal at Mahādev-Sinān, not far from Ranibandh, has been completed. There is a proposal to construct a second dam across the Bhairabbānki which will irrigate two entire mauzas. A large number of irrigation wells have also been dug at various places within the thana under small irrigation schemes.

Considering the healthy climate and the picturesque scenery all round, Ranibandh, with better amenities, may well be an attractive tourist centre in the future.

Sābrākon—A village in the south-east corner of Taldangra police station, some 16 km. (10 miles) south of Vishnupur town and 22.5 km. (14 miles) south-east of Taldangra. It is difficult of access, the last 3.2 km. (2 miles) from the nearest motorable road being negotiable only on foot or by a bullock cart. In 1961 it had a population of 1,187 persons. The principal object of interest here is a brick *āṭ-chālā* temple with two hut-shaped roofs, one superimposed on the other and four short vertical walls of a rectangular cross-section standing in between. According to a stone inscription embedded above the entrance arches, the shrine was founded by Raja Bir Singh II of Vishnupur in 983 Malla year corresponding to 1676 A.D. It is not a big temple; the total height would be within 12.2 metres (40 feet). A high brick wall, now in ruins, once enclosed the compound. As is customary with all Krishna shrines, there are also the usual *Dol-mancha* and *Rās-mancha* near by where the deity is transferred on ceremonial occasions. The picturesque Purandhar river meanders past the temple lending charm to its location. It appears that in days gone by the river used to flow in two courses encircling the temple which stood on high ground. One of the channels has since dried up but its old bed can still be seen to the north and east. The deity is an idol of Krishna fashioned out of shining black stone. The sculpture is excellent and the image may be considered as one of the finest of its kind in the district attesting to the high degree of skill acquired by the icon-makers of the time. O'Malley cited the following legend about the deity in his old Bankura District Gazetteer: "A holy *sādhu* came from the north-west with two idols, one called Rām (Balarām) and the

other Krishna, and lived in the jungle near Sābrākon. One day when he was away begging, the idols assumed the form of two boys and began to dance round the hut. A milkman happened to be passing by on his way to Bishnupur, and the boys handed him a mango, which they told him to give to the Rājā. On his arrival at Bishnupur, however, the milkman forgot all about it, and that night both he and the Rājā dreamed about the mango. . . . The Rājā, having heard his (milkman's) story, set out to see the boys, but they were no longer to be seen. He begged the *sādhu* to give him the idols, and the latter at last consented to give him one of the two. It is not known which he gave, and hence the idol is called by the joint name Rām Krishna."[1] Another legend about the temple is that no bird can fly over it, for on attempting to do so, it falls down dead. Raja Bir Singh II made substantial land grants for the upkeep of the temple but these have since dwindled and those who are now in charge of maintaining the shrine are said to be in financial difficulty. An annual fair is held in the precincts of the temple which attracts a large gathering.

Saldā—An ancient village in Joypur police station having a population of 2,413 persons in 1961 and situated 3.2 km. (2 miles) south-east of Joypur which lies on the Vishnupur-Arambagh road, 13 km. (8 miles) east of Vishnupur town.

Connected with Joypur by an unmetalled road, Saldā is now an obscure village but it is a veritable store-house of archaeological remains which speak of the important role it had once played in the religious and cultural life of the district. Most important of the relics are the vestiges of an enormous temple, or rather, a temple-complex, on the south bank of a big tank known as Dom-dighi. It is said that the group of temples here was dedicated to Bhubaneswara Siva whose enormous phallic emblem still stands derelict on the forsaken mound on which architectural pieces like parts of basement mouldings and *āmalaka-silās*, solidly built turrets representing *sikhara* temples, sized stone blocks used in different parts of extinct shrines and several sculptures representing various gods and goddesses, lie scattered about. From the size and proportions of these architectural members, the conclusion becomes inevitable that the temple of Bhubaneswara must have been an enormous one and that its subsidiary structures were in keeping with the main shrine.

Legend has it that Kālāpāhār, the well-known iconoclast, destroyed the temple of Bhubaneswara. But the deity, unable to stall the invader, despatched a timely warning to Gandheswara, another Siva *lingam* enshrined elsewhere in the same village, which saved the latter from the wrath of the infidel.

[1] L. S. S. O'Malley—Bengal District Gazetteers : Bankura. Calcutta, 1908. p. 173.

The temple of Gandheswara, a solidly built laterite *sikhara* temple of somewhat stunted proportions, and the big laterite *pancharatna* shrine of Gokulchānd are the most important extant edifices in the village. According to a stone inscription set above the southern doors of the latter temple, it was built by one Chandra Malla, possibly of the Vishnupur royal house, in the latter half of the 17th century. The walls of this structure display fine specimens of laterite sculpture. It is now abandoned with weeds growing all over and although one of the earliest laterite temples in the Vishnupur area, it is now in a lamentable state of disrepair.

A number of stone sculptures representing both Hindu and Jain deities lies collected under trees in the village. An elaborately carved trefoil arch and a fine stone image of recumbent Vishnu which were discovered here, are now preserved in the museum of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad, Vishnupur.

Sārengā—A large and flourishing village in the Raipur police station (population 2,530 in 1961) situated about 8 km. (5 miles) south-east of Raipur with which it is connected by a metalled road. It can be reached from the district headquarters along the Taldangra-Simlapal-Raipur asphalt road. The easiest way to come to this remote village from outside the district is to get down at the Chandrakonā Road railway station of the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway and take a bus to Sārengā, 38 km. (24 miles) away. The present prosperity of the village is chiefly attributable to the Methodist Missionary Society (formerly, Wesleyan Mission), a branch of which was established here in the beginning of the present century for carrying on educational and evangelical activities. A Senior Basic Training school, a Junior Basic Training school, a Junior Basic Training college, hostels for students of both sexes, a hospital and a church have been set up by this missionary organization. While the educational institutions have been instrumental in spreading enlightenment in the neighbourhood, the church caters to the religious needs of the local Christians of whom a large number lives in Sārengā and in the villages near by. The welfare activities of Christian missionaries spread over many decades have changed Sārengā from a settlement of backward villagers to a thriving commercial centre populated by many literate people.

Simlāpāl—Headquarters of the police station of the same name situated some 38 km. (24 miles) south of Bankura town with which it is connected by an asphalt road passing *via* Taldangra. Being a thana headquarters, it contains the usual complement of public offices. In 1961 it had a population of 1,968 persons. There is no object of special importance here, archaeological or otherwise, but an interesting sociological fact stems from the local family of zemindars, popularly known as the Simlāpāl Raj, which has been

responsible for inducting into this part of the country a large population of Orissan stock.

History of the Simlāpāl Raj family

The family traces its origin from one Sripati Mahāpātra, an Utkala Brahmin and the spiritual guide and general of Nakur Tuṅg, who legendarily set up the Tuṅgbhum kingdom comprising of parts of Raipur, Simlapal and Taldangra police stations towards the middle of the 14th century. On the basis of information collected from the zemindar families of Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā, O'Malley, in the old Bankura District Gazetteer, had stated that in the remote past one Tuṅg Deo came from the banks of the river Gandaki on a pilgrimage to Puri where, through the favours of Lord Jagannāth, he became the king of Puri but his grandson, Gangādhar Tuṅg, was informed by the deity that after him there would be no king of his line in that city and that his son should, therefore, change his name and migrate to some other territory. Nakur Tuṅg, Gangādhar's son, accordingly, took with him his family and a number of soldiers and reached this part of the country which was then infested with robbers—the previous king, called Sāmantasar Raja, having died with his family, so the legend goes, by jumping into fire for reasons not very clear. Nakur Tuṅg suppressed lawlessness in the neighbourhood and named the place Jagannāthpur in honour of Lord Jagannāth of Puri and assumed the title of Raja Chhatra Nārāyan Deb. He is said to have brought with him 252 families of Utkala Brahmins whose descendants now form a large section of the population of this area. Sripati Mahāpātra was the spiritual guide and general of Nākur Tuṅg and to him the Raja made over the parganas of Simlāpāl and Bhelāidihā where the descendants of Sripati have been living since.

According to another account, Sripati Mahāpātra (who is also known as Sripati Singh Mahāpātra) left his native place at Bir Rāmpur in Cuttack (Orissa) and appearing before the then Malla king of Vishnupur pleased him by certain acts of prowess and was allowed, as a reward, to rule over that part of the territory which he could cover in a single day's ride. Sripati rode his horse around a tract of land which comprises today—so goes the story—the entire Simlāpāl police station and parts of Taldangra and Raipur thanas and thus became a feudal chieftain of consequence under the Malla Rajas with headquarters at Simlāpāl. News of Sripati's success reached his native land and many of his countrymen flocked to the new kingdom and from them has sprung the sizable population of Utkala Brahmins now inhabiting this region.

With the decline of Malla power, the Simlāpāl Raj was reduced to the status of zemindars and at the time of the eighteenth ruler of the line, the property was divided between the brothers Lakshman Singha Chowdhury and Laskar Singha Chowdhury, the former getting a ten-annas share, now called pargana Simlāpāl, and the

latter a six-annas share, known at present as pargana Bheläidihä. According to tradition, this happened around 1023 B.S. (1617 A.D.). Following a custom observed both in the Simläpäl and Bheläidihä houses, the eldest son inherits the property and is designated the Raja with the surname 'Singha Chowdhury' while the second son assumes the surname 'Singha Hikim' and the third 'Singha Bada Thākur' while the rest use the appellation 'Singha Bābu'.

The Brahmin immigrants from Orissa, who have multiplied over the centuries, now predominate in numbers and prosperity in the Simlapal police station and, to a lesser extent, in the Taldangra and Raipur police stations. They speak Bengali, have adopted Bengali ways of life and are otherwise indistinguishable from the indigenous population but they still retain their Orissan surnames and are strictly endogamous. This insular group of exotic origin provides an interesting field for ethnological study.

Sonāmukhi—A municipal town and headquarters of the police station of the same name situated 34 km. (21 miles) north of Vishnupur and 42 km. (26 miles) north-east of Bankura town. It is connected with Vishnupur by a metalled road running across the unbridged Dwarakeswar river which is, however, open to through motor traffic during fair weather. An asphalt road connects the town with the district headquarters *via* Beliātore. The town derives its name from that of Subarnamukhi or Sonāmukhi (the golden-faced one), the guardian deity of the place, whose temple, a modern flat-roofed structure. stands in the heart of the residential locality. Legend has it that Bhāskar Rāo, the leader of the Maratha invaders, visited the shrine on one of his raids into western Bengal towards the middle of the 18th century and that the nose of the image was broken off by Kālāpāhār, the well-known Muslim iconoclast.

The earliest known reference to Sonāmukhi occurs in the *Desābali-bibriti*, a 17th century text written by one Jaganmohan Pundit in which informations relating to certain places in Bankura district were added in the middle of the 18th century by a later chronicler of unknown identity. It names the place as Swarnamukhya and wrongly places it 56 km. (35 miles) north of Vishnupur. Another early citation occurs in the records of the Board of Revenue by way of a complaint made by the East India Company's Commercial Resident stationed here regarding obstructions to trade caused by the Raja of Burdwan, upon which an officer was deputed to make an enquiry and the Raja was forbidden to interfere in any way with the commercial business of the Company's factories.

Sonāmukhi was constituted a municipality in 1886 and the present limits of the town extend over 7.2 sq. km. (4.5 sq. miles) inhabited, according to the 1961 Census, by 15,027 persons of whom 5,448 are literate and educated, 1,621 are engaged in manufacture and industries, 757 in trade and commerce, 407 in agricultural pursuits

and 339 in transport and storage business. These figures would warrant that the economy of the town has a strong industrial bias. The town has 7 Primary schools, a Higher Secondary school (originally started in 1887 in commemoration of the jubilee of Queen Victoria), a leprosy clinic run by the Zilla Parishad, a maternity and child welfare centre as also a rural health centre run by the State Government.

Sonāmukhi's renown as an important centre of textile and *tassar*-silk weaving is fairly old inasmuch as the *Desābalibibriti* mentions the place as a hamlet of weavers. The development of the village, however, was largely due to the commercial enterprise of the East India Company which established factories here for the manufacture of silk, textile, shellac and indigo products. In 1838, Sonāmukhi was reported in official papers as the site of a 'head' factory with 31 subordinate *āurangs* (collection centres) functioning under it. John Cheap, the celebrated Commercial Resident under the E. I. Company, took over the management of the Sonāmukhi establishment in December 1797. The enormous wealth amassed by him through private business, the lavish and spectacular way in which he lived and the extensive powers that he exercised over the neighbouring populace earned for him the sobriquet of 'Cheap the Magnificent' whom William Hunter has immortalized in his Annals of Rural Bengal. "The whole industrial classes were in his pay, and in his person Government appeared in its most benign aspect. A long unpaid retinue followed him from one factory to another, and as the procession defiled through the hamlets, mothers held aloft their children to catch a sight of his palanquin, while the elders bowed low before the providence from whom they derived their daily bread. Happy was the infant on whom his shadow fell!" A two-storeyed palatial building, now derelict, standing within a spacious compound on the outskirts of the town is pointed out as the residence of John Cheap. It is said that on the death of his mistress—her tomb is to be seen at the rear of the house—he left the place for good and eventually died at Ganuṭiā in Birbhum district where he was laid to rest.

The decline of the commercial prosperity of Sonāmukhi started with the introduction of English piece-goods into the Indian market leading to the withdrawal of the East India Company from the weaving trade as the coarse local products were unable to compete with the machine-made finer stuff imported from Lancashire. The indigo business also suffered a similar fate on account of the introduction of chemical dyes. Silk-weaving, pottery-making and the manufacture of shellac, however, continued to subsist inasmuch as O'Malley reported in 1908 that these industries were thriving at the turn of the century and that several lac factories were then established by the local merchants in the Rānchi district to which artisans were

sent from Sonāmukhi. Around 1929, there were only 8 small shellac factories in the town, of which none survives today. Unlike the shellac and the indigo industries, silk and textile weaving have held their ground and have even improved their position during recent years. According to the 1961 Census, there were 68 silk-weaving and 151 cotton-weaving units at Sonāmukhi. Pottery-making, another traditional craft of the place, still engages a number of artisans who, besides manufacturing the usual earthen utensils, also fashion terracotta horses and elephants which are in great demand in the neighbourhood as votive objects. The burnt-clay horses of Sonāmukhi, squat in size and displaying ornate decorations on them, do not compare favourably with similar specimens from Pānchmurā which are noted for their rustic simplicity reflecting a virile folk tradition.

The objects of archaeological interest in the town include several shrines of which the exquisitely ornamented brick temple of Sridhara near the bazar is the most important. An inscription on the back wall states that the temple was built by one Kānhāi Rudradāsa in 1845 A.D. and the architect was one Hari Sutradhara. A Siva temple in the Chandrapārā locality also displays terracotta embellishments. The shrine of goddess Sonāmukhi and the tomb of Monohar Dās, a Vaishnava saint, do not possess any architectural merit but they are held in high religious esteem by the people of the locality. The tomb of Monohar Dās is an important centre of Vaishnava pilgrimage attracting large crowds during the annual *mahotsava* festival occurring on the Rāmnavami day falling in the Bengali month of *Chaitra* (March-April). A large fair and the *annakuṭa* festival are also held on this occasion.

A quaint legend is told about Monohar Dās who was an intimate disciple of Birabhadra, son of Nityānanda. Once Monohar, accompanied by two other disciples of Birabhadra, went on a pilgrimage to Puri when they met on the way a monk who was none other than Birabhadra himself in disguise. The preceptor, intending to test the humility of his disciples, persuaded them to hold a discussion with him on theological matters. The companions proudly accepted the challenge but humble Monohar Dās stayed away. Pleased with his modesty, the foremost virtue of a true Vaishnava, Birabhadra disclosed his identity and asked Monohar to go to Sonāmukhi where he would find things to his satisfaction. Meanwhile, one Rām Adhikāri, priest in Syām Rāi's temple at Sonāmukhi, saw a vision in a dream that a holy man was on his way to meet him. The two met at Sonāmukhi and after some time, Rām Adhikāri requested Monohar to take charge of the deity as also his minor daughter Rāidhani, leaving him free to go to Brindāvan to pass his last days there. Monohar agreed and settled down at Sonāmukhi as the priest of Syām Rāi and the guardian of Rāidhani. When

the girl attained marriageable age, Monohar, after a diligent search, selected one Dhanirām Chattopadhyay of Noā-Santoshpur, now in Burdwan district, and gave the girl to him in marriage. Having thus fulfilled his obligations regarding his ward, Monohar sat in deep meditation and passed away. Legends are common in the neighbourhood that Monohar Dās possessed miraculous powers. It is told that on one occasion he asked for a piece of loin cloth from the local weavers who refused to comply with the request. Next morning they woke up to find all their belongings destroyed. They came in a body to the saint and appealed to him for the restoration of their property, which was immediately done and they became his staunch followers and have remained so ever since contributing regularly to the holding of the annual festival in his honour. In the shrine there is no image of Monohar Dās who is simply represented by a pair of wooden sandals said to have been used by him when alive. The assembled devotees worship these symbols and make their offerings, according to custom, by placing pairs of wooden sandals inside the sanctum.

Sonātopal—A large *sikhara* temple, one of the biggest in the district but now in ruins, is situated in Sonātopal mauza (J.L. No. 75) about 8 km. (5 miles) east of Bankura town, not far from the right bank of the Dwarakeswar river. It can be reached over an unmetalled road, some 3.2 km. (2 miles) in length, starting from the point where the Bankura-Vishnupur road crosses the South Eastern Railway line, a little to the west of Bheduāsol railway station. The construction of the temple is ascribed to a legendary king Sālivāhana, remains of whose fort in the shape of mounds are still to be seen in the vicinity. The local people call these mounds the *garh* (fort) of king Sālivāhana. The old name of the place appears to have been Hāmirdāṅgā.

From the structural and decorative points of view, the temple appears to have been built in or about the 11th century. J. D. Beglar in his report of 1872-73[1] described it as "a tall brick temple, solidly built of bricks measuring 12 inches by 8½ inches; thirty-three courses of bricks with the interposed mud cement make up 7 feet of height. The temple is remarkably solid, the dimensions of the sanctum inside being only 12 feet square, but the great height and the material, brick, need a greater thickness than stone. The roof of the cella begins to contract by overlapping courses at a height of 18 feet. The overlaps are at first of six courses each, then after four such overlaps there are five overlaps of five courses each, after which the overlaps are of four, and subsequently of three and of two courses each. The entrance is of the usual style of overlapping

[1] J. D. Beglar—'Report of a Tour through Bengal Provinces in 1872-73', published in Archaeological Survey of India Report, Vol. VIII. Calcutta, 1878. pp. 198-206.

openings; it is 6 feet 1 inch wide. The overlaps are one of six courses, two of five courses each, seven of four courses each, five of three courses each, and one of two courses, there being altogether 61 courses disposed in 16 overlaps on each side to the point where the two sides of the triangle approach to within 4 inches of each other. ...The temple stands on a high plinth, now a shapeless mound, it does not appear, from the absence of the dividing sill in the opening, that the temple had any *mandapa* in front, and the facade is indeed complete as it is, there being no part or line where the walls of any chamber or structure in front could touch the present facade without hiding some ornament or falling upon some moulding or ornamental sculpture. The long platform, therefore, in front of the temple (now a terrace of earth and rubbish), must have been meant for open air gatherings, as is common to this day, especially in *melas* or fairs, or for a subordinate temple facing the main one. ...The temple was covered with plaster and richly and profusely ornamented. The plaster—from its ornamentation corresponding in all parts with the cut brick ornamentation below—I consider to have formed part of the original design, and not, as is too often the case, added afterwards. The plaster has, however, come off in most parts; the top of the temple has disappeared long ago and is now a shapeless mass of ruin on which young trees are allowed to take root and flourish undisturbed. It is a pity that a fine temple, as this must have been, should have been allowed to decay."

In its days of glory, the edifice was certainly one of the finest monuments in the district comparable in dimensions and excellence of execution to the more famous *sikhara* temple at Bahulārā. The latter is in a much better state of preservation as it subsequently became an important centre of Sivaite worship thereby attracting enduring popular attention. The Sonātopal shrine does not house any deity now nor is there any conclusive evidence to prove the nature of worship for which it was originally meant. An image of a Sun-god was found some years ago near the shrine which leads some people to think that the structure was initially erected for Sun-worship. This supposition is apparently corroborated by the fact that Brahmins of the Sun-worshipping *Sākadwipi* sect still live near by in the Birshinghapur-Rājhāṭ area. The edifice, like all Sun-temples, faces east and a legend common to other centres of Sun-worship in India is also associated with it. The story goes that Krishna once cursed his son Aniruddha for a grievous sex-offence resulting in the latter's contracting leprosy. Aniruddha, following his father's advice, went to Sākadwipa on the shores of the 'Western Sea' and having propitiated the Sun-god through prolonged penances, recovered from his illness. He then returned to Jambudwipa (India) and built the present temple as an act of

thanksgiving to the Sun-god. All these evidences and legends would not, however, conclusively prove the site to be an erstwhile place for Sun-worship unless they are materially corroborated by further investigations and, in particular, competent excavation of the mound in front of the temple. Beglar lamented, as early as in 1872, that such a fine temple should not have been allowed to decay. But this outstanding structure of great archaeological importance has suffered from severe neglect causing it irrepairable damage.

A big annual fair is held at the adjacent village of Tapoban for six consecutive days beginning from the last day of the Durgā puja and continuing till the date of the Lakshmi puja, which is attended, on an average, by 4,000 to 5,000 people.

Susuniā Hill—Next to Bihārināth Hill, it is the most important peak in the district situated on the northern border of Chhatna police station and rising abruptly from the neighbouring plains to a height of 439.5 metres (1,442 feet). It runs almost due east-west for a distance of nearly 3.2 km. (2 miles). Stone quarrying was extensively practised at the base of the hill in the past. The industry still flourishes within moderate limits. An annual fair is held at the southern foot of the hill where there is a small spring.

Susuniā's principal claim to renown is associated with the famous rock inscription of Chandravarma, found on the wall of a cave and ascribed to the 4th century A.D., which has been adequately described in Chapter II.

In 1966, the Directorate of Archaeology, West Bengal, carried out a number of explorations on and around Susuniā hill which unearthed various types of pre-historic artefacts claimed by them to go a long way to prove that Pleistocene *hominids* and later *homo sapiens* once had their habitat in this region. The finds include early palaeolithic implements done in Abbevillian technique, later palaeolithic artefacts done in Acheulian technique, microlithic lunates, burins and a variety of neolithic implements. Among other finds, the most important are some supposed fossil remains of *Palaeoloxodon namidicus*, a mammal contemporary of the Pleistocene *hominid* and predecessor of the elephant. By a radio-carbon test, these remains appear to be of animals which existed 40,000 years ago.[1]

Recently, Susuniā has attracted some notice as a centre of hill climbing in eastern India. The Himalayan Association, Calcutta, organized, with full technical collaboration from the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, a short course of rock climbing in this hill from the 21st to the 26th January 1965. It was the first training course of its kind at this site in which 23 trainees,

[1] Pares Chandra Dasgupta—*Prāgaitihāsik Susuniā.* Calcutta, 1967.

including 5 women, participated and received their badges from the celebrated mountaineer Norman Dyhranfurth, leader of the successful American Everest expedition of 1963. The first course of training being a success, the Association has decided to make it a regular feature every winter.

Vishnupur Subdivision—The subdivision derives its name from that of the principal town in it, which, in point of population and size, is second only to the district headquarters but was founded much earlier than the latter. It covers the eastern one-third of the district and adjoins Hooghly on the east and south-east, Midnapur on the south and Burdwan on the north.

Geologically, the subdivision consists of alluvial plains and the landscape offers little relief from the monotony of a uniform scenery of wide expanses of rice-fields, green in the rains but parched and dry in the hot weather. The Damodar and the Dwarakeswar are the principal rivers of the subdivision—the former flowing along the northern boundary of Sonamukhi and Patrasayer police stations and the latter dividing the subdivision into two approximately equal halves in its course from west to east. Other smaller rivers worthy of mention are the Bodai and the Sali (tributaries of the Damodar), the Berai (a tributary of the Dwarakeswar) and the Amodar, which passes out of the district and joins the Dwarakeswar in Midnapur.

The subdivision of Vishnupur consists of Vishnupur, Joypur, Kotulpur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Indas police stations and encompasses an area of 1,848 sq. km. (713.5 sq. miles). There are 991 rural mauzas in it covering an area of 1,807 sq. km. (697.6 sq. miles) while the townships account for an urban area of 41.2 sq. km. (15.9 sq. miles) only. Vishnupur and Sonamukhi have municipalities constituted in 1873 and 1886 respectively while Patrasayer is a non-municipal town. Joypur, Kotulpur and Indas are mauzas each with a population exceeding 5,000 persons. According to the 1961 Census, the total population of the subdivision consists of 4,89,535 persons of whom 4,36,968 reside in rural areas and only 52,567 live in towns. Not more than 3 per cent of the entire population represent members of the Scheduled Tribes and 33.9 per cent belong to the Scheduled Castes. The rest of the population is composed mainly of caste Hindus and a sizable sprinkling of Muslims.

The number of literates (i.e. one who can read and write a simple letter in the mother tongue) and educated persons, enumerated together during the 1961 Census, was 1,14,753. There are a Degree college (the Rāmānanda College), a Polytechnic (the K. G. Engineering Institute), a music college (the Rāmsaran Music College) and two music schools in Vishnupur town.

A big Government hospital as also a privately-run hospital are located at the subdivisional headquarters. Another hospital is to be found at Piārdobā. There is a leprosy treatment centre at

Sonamukhi. Each thana headquarters has a Primary Health Centre and there are Sub-Primary Health Centres at places like Sihar, Deshrā and Rāmsāgar.

A large percentage of the population—1,04,911 persons in all, according to the 1961 Census—are agriculturists. Persons engaged in industrial pursuits number 9,621 only. While there are no heavy or large-scale industries, modern manufacturing establishments are represented by small engineering workshops and rice mills. Economically and otherwise significant industrial products are turned out mostly by rural artisans engaged in cottage and small-scale industries. Of these, silk-weaving, rayon-weaving and cotton textile industries of Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer, Birsinghapur, Madanmohanpur and Changdobā, brass and bell-metal industries of Vishnupur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer and Ajodhyā, conch-shell industry of Vishnupur, Patrasayer and Rāibāghini are worthy of mention. Some centres of the subdivision specialize in unusual crafts which are economically not very significant now; these include *solā* (pith) products of Kotulpur, Deshrā and Sihar, *parasi-mālā* (necklaces made of wooden beads for devout Vaishnavas) of Bāmrā and Bālsi and *amburi tāmāk* (scented hookah tobacco) of Vishnupur.

Besides being an important centre of age-old handicrafts, Vishnupur town is also of considerable historical consequence as it had been the seat of the Malla kings for centuries. No other city of West Bengal offers so many fine specimens of old Bengali temple architecture which have been separately described in the article on Vishnupur Town. The temples at Dharāpāṭ, Dihar, Abantikā, Jādabnagar, Jāmkundi, Saldā, Moynāpur, Koṅārpur, Krishnanagar, Birsinghapur, Sonamukhi, Patrasayer, Rājgrām and Kotulpur are also architecturally significant. The modern temple built by the Rāmakrishna Mission at Jayrāmbāṭi attracts a large number of pilgrims. Some ruins of archaeological interest exist at Dumni, Kotulpur, Saldā and Pradyumnapur. Notable places of Hindu pilgrimage in the subdivision are Dihar, Jayrāmbāṭi, Koṅārpur and Vishnupur, while Lokpur attracts devout Muslims.

Vishnupur Town—Headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated at 23°5′ North latitude and 87°20′ East longitude, 5 km. (3 miles) south of the Dwarakeswar river. It is served by the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway [the railway station being at a distance of 1.6 km. (1 mile) from the town proper] as also by an asphalt road connecting it with the district headquarters 32 km. (20 miles) away. As a subdivisional headquarters, the town has the usual Government offices, a hospital and a sub-jail. Its population according to the 1961 Census, is 30,958 of whom 13,045 are literate and educated. Vishnupur was constituted a municipality in 1873 and its present limits extend over 20.6 sq. km. (8 sq. miles) divided into 16 wards.

Educational and cultural institutions

There are 2 Higher Secondary schools (one for boys and the other for girls), a Degree college named after late Ramananda Chatterjee, an illustrious son of Bankura, a polytechnic, the Krishna Gobinda Engineering Institute, 2 music schools (one for boys and another for girls) and a music college called the Rāmsaran Sangit Mahāvidyālaya. Vishnupur has cherished from mediaeval times the art of North Indian classical music and the school devoted to its study, popularly known as the Vishnupur *Gharānā*, still carries on the tradition. (An article on Vishnupur *Gharānā* is appended to the chapter on Education and Culture). Another prominent cultural institution is the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad established in 1951 for the cultivation of Bengali language and literature and for carrying on extensive research relating to the traditional culture of the Rāḍh region in general and Mallabhum in particular. The Parishad has a rich collection of old manuscripts, numbering about 5,000, appertaining to various aspects of learning and culture in this part of the country. The museology section of this institution, the Jogeschandra Purākriti Bhavan, named after Jogeschandra Ray Vidyānidhi, another eminent resident of Bankura, contains archaeological, numismatic, textile and various other exhibits relating to the traditional art and culture of the Rāḍh region.

Sanskrit learning

After Bir Hāmbir's conversion into Vaishnavism by Srinivāsa, the reputed Vaishnava scholar and savant (the details have been related in the chapter on History), Vishnupur became a prominent centre of Sanskrit learning under the active patronage of successive Malla rulers. This fact is amply corroborated by the manuscripts now in the possession of the Vishnupur branch of the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishad. It is on record that scholars were given liberal grants of land as also other facilities for settling down at the Malla capital and running the various educational institutions.

Trade and handicrafts

Apart from its importance as a seat of learning and culture, Vishnupur appears to have been a notable centre of trade and handicrafts even prior to its becoming the Malla capital. There is a strong belief amongst the conch-shell artisans of the Rājhāṭi sect still flourishing in the town that long before the advent of the Malla power, they, along with immigrants of the Tāmbuli, Karmakār, Gop and Garāi (Teli) communities, settled down here following a devastating flood in the Dwarakeswar river compelling them to abandon their ancestral abode in Rājhāṭ and adjoining villages. Traditional industries of Vishnupur include silk-weaving and manufacture of brass, bell-metal, tobacco and conch-shell products. It is said that a large section of the population of the Malla capital in its heyday consisted of Sānkhāris, Tāmbulis (a trading caste) and weavers. In recent times, modern industries like rayon weaving and manufacture of cheap lanterns of a rural type have

developed on a fairly large scale. Silk products of Vishnupur once enjoyed a renown extending far beyond the bounds of the Malla capital. The recent fall in the demand of pure silk goods has contributed to the corresponding growth of rayon and cotton weaving. The scented *amburi* and *bālākhānā* tobacco produced here was also in great demand throughout India. Though on the decline now, this industry as also the brass and bell-metal crafts still hold their ground.

Emergence of the Malla capital

It is not known for certain when precisely the Malla power set up Vishnupur as its capital. According to the pundits' chronicle (referred to in the chapter on History), the 18th king of the line, Jagat Malla, shifted the capital from Lāugrām to Vishnupur, while the family records state that Jai Malla, the second king, was responsible for it. Legends apart, concrete historical evidence on this point is available only from the time of Dhār Hāmbir (1586 A.D.) who had his capital at Vishnupur where, according to the testimony of *Ākbarnāmā*, he had safely escorted Jagat Singh, the son of Mān Singh, after his defeat in the hands of the Afgans. Since then, the town continued to be the seat of the Malla kings up to the beginning of the 19th century when the vast estates, already undermined by internecine quarrels, were sold out for arrears of revenue.

Description of the fort and the citadel

Evidence of the power once exercised by the Vishnupur royal house is provided by the remains still found in the town, though there is nothing much left besides a number of fine temples in brick and laterite and eight extensive tanks to justify the tradition that "Vishnupur was once the most renowned city in the world and more beautiful than the exquisite house of Indra in heaven."

The capital was once well-protected by strong lines of fortifications, intelligently planned and executed, in which the spacious deep tanks played an important role. The Malla kings, taking advantage of the natural hollows, built embankments across them so as to confine the surface drainage, and the lakes so formed, popularly known as *bāndhs*, not only served as never-failing sources of good fresh water to the city and the fort but also formed extensive moats which helped to flood the narrower channels running round the protective earthen ramparts of the citadel. The Krishna-bāndh, the Syām-bāndh, the Lāl-bāndh and the Chowkhān-bāndh (now silted up) lay to the east, the Jamunā-bāndh, the Kālindi-bāndh and the Gāntāt-bāndh lay to the west and the Pokā-bāndh lay to the north of the city. The first seven tanks stretched from the north to the south on either side of the town with parallel lines of embankments encompassing them on which, at strategic points, *ghātwāli* settlements were granted by the Vishnupur kings to specially selected persons of martial stock whose duty it was to defend the respective points in times of emergency. High embankments also stretched from the east to the west of the city, thus providing a continuous line of

fortification flanked by a deep moat running all along its course. The Malla capital had also the natural advantage of the Dwarakeswar and the Berai rivers flowing across its northern boundary, while there was an impenetrable forest to the south of the city. The royal pleasure gardens are said to have been laid out along the banks of the Lāl-bāndh.

Within these outer fortifications, was the fort proper which had a high earthen wall and a moat running round it. The approach was through two massive stone gateways (known as *pāthar darwāzās*), the larger one having arrow slits on either side of the entrance for archers and gunmen. It had double-storied galleries flanking the central passage for accommodating troops. A curious structure, locally known as the *gumghar*, with four solid brick walls and no entrance except from the top, is to be seen on the southern rampart of the citadel. According to tradition, it was used as a dungeon in which criminals were thrown to die of starvation, their sufferings being aggravated by the nails which studded its bottom and sides. The authenticity of this account is not beyond doubt as the structure might as well have been used as a water reservoir. In fact, remnants of terracotta pipes lying near by can still be seen.

A remarkable relic of the military prowess of the Malla kings is a gigantic cannon, apparently made of 63 hoops or short cylinders of wrought iron welded together and overlying another cylinder similarly fashioned—the whole contraption being welded over and worked together. The dents made by the hammers and the joining of the hoops are still plainly visible. Though exposed to the vagaries of the weather for centuries, the cannon is free from rust and has a dark metallic surface. Its length is 3.8 metres (12½ feet), the diameter of the bore being 29.2 cm. (11½ inches) at the muzzle and 28.6 cm. (11¼ inches) throughout the remainder of its length. It lay half-buried in the ground for long but has now been restored and placed on a stone pedestal in the southern extremity of the fort area and is under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. Legend connects this magnificent piece of ordnance, named *Dalamardan* (commonly pronounced as Dalmādal) meaning the disperser of the enemy, with the deity Madanmohan who, so goes the story, fired it along with another similar cannon to repel invading Maratha free-booters who besieged Vishnupur under Bhāskar Rāo during the reign of Gopāl Singh. The other cannon is missing but there is a popular belief that it lies at the bottom of one of the lakes in the town. It is said that the Malla kings had once a big factory for casting such cannons, many of which, of smaller dimensions, are still to be seen in and around Vishnupur. One of them is fired once a year to announce to the dwellers of Mallabhum the exact time of commencement of the second day of the Durgā puja festival.

To the north-east of the fortified area lay the citadel and within this again the royal palace. It is said that the buildings of the Malla capital, in its palmy days, were of white marble and that within the walls of the city were dwelling houses, theatres, decorated rooms and dressing rooms together with the royal treasury, store houses, armouries, barracks for soldiers, stables for elephants and horses etc. In the middle of the citadel stood the brick-built royal palace enclosed by a high compound wall, while the inner apartments, encompassed by another wall, lay around a quadrangle consisting of four towered buildings, three, four and five storeys high. The royal secretariat and the court were perhaps to the north-east of the palace. What the royal apartments may have been in their days of glory can now only be imagined as at present an insignificant pile of brick buildings, surrounded by ruins, marks the site.

Temples

The present renown of Vishnupur stems mainly from the magnificent temples built by successive kings (and queens) of the Malla family. Most of them are to be found in two big concentrations—the Syām Rāy, Jor-Bāṅglā, Rādhā-Syām, Lālji, Krishna, Balarām, Nikunjabihāri and Kesar Rāy shrines lying within the fort area while the Kālāchānd, Rādhā-Mādhav, Rādhā-Govinda, Jor-Mandir (actually comprising three separate shrines) and Nandalāl temples are dispersed over an area to the south and south-west of Lāl-bāndh. The Malleswara, Madan-Gopāl and Madan-Mohan temples are to the north of the fort and the Rās-mancha to the south of the citadel. The table at pages 576 and 577 furnishes the particulars of the extant Vishnupur monuments in a tabulated form.

Besides these extant temples, there were some interesting shrines which are now either in ruins or have vanished. The Murali-Mohan temple (built in 1665 by Chuḍāmani, queen of Bir Singh II), the Rādhā-Binode temple (built in 1660 by Bir Singh II) and an anonymous shrine within the fort area are now in a dilapidated condition. A large shrine at Hāzrāpārā, built by one Sitārām Sarmā in 1673 during the reign of Bir Singh II, has disappeared altogether.

From a study of the Vishnupur temples, five distinctive architectural styles can be deciphered. The *sikhara* type, exemplified by the Krishna, Balarām, Nikunjabihāri and Kesar Rāy temples, originated from the Orissan version of the *Nāgara-sikhara* style with such local variations of it as were enjoined principally by the transience of the building materials and the length of the builder's purse. In this context, the stunted structures of the Krishna and Balarām temples offer some novelty both in plan and in decorative devices. The Malleswara temple, originally conceived as a *sikhara* structure, assumed its present peculiar form with an octagonal arched tower on the top only in recent times. The *jor-bāṅglā*, the *ekaratna*, the *pancharatna* and the *navaratna* styles stemmed from a common source, namely the ubiquitous *chālā* (a hut with a thatched roof)

PARTICULARS OF EXTANT MONUMENTS AT VISHNUPUR

Name of the temple: in use or (abandoned)	Location	Material used and type of structure	Date and builder	Embellishments
Rās-mancha (abandoned)	West of Vishnupur H.S. School	Brick: pyramidal	End of 16th or beginning of 17th century: Bir Hāmbir	Terracotta figures on outer walls
Malleswara (in use)	Malleswara locality	Laterite and brick: originally *Sikhara*	1622 A.D.: Bir Singh I	A fine stone elephant above the entrance
Syām Rāy (abandoned)	Within the fort	Brick: *Pancharatna*	1643 A.D.: Raghunāth Singh I	Profuse terracotta decorations all over
Jor-Bānglā (abandoned)	-do-	Brick: *Jor-Bānglā*	1655 A.D.: Raghunāth Singh I	-do-
Kālāchānd (abandoned)	South of Lāl-bāndh	Laterite: *Ekaratna*	1656 A.D.: Raghunāth Singh I	Laterite sculptures on facade
Lālji (abandoned)	Within the fort	-do-	1658 A.D.: Bir Singh II	Geometrical stucco ornaments above eastern arches
Madan-Gopāl (in use)	Mādhabganj	Laterite: *Pancharatna*	1665 A.D.: Siromani, queen of Bir Singh II	Sparse laterite decorations
Madan-Mohan (in use)	Sānkhāribāzār	Brick: *Ekaratna*	1694 A.D.: Durjan Singh	Profuse terracotta decorations on facade and walls of entrance porch
Jor-Mandir (abandoned)	South-west of Lāl-bāndh	Laterite: *Ekaratna*	1726 A.D.: Gopāl Singh	Laterite sculptures on walls

(Contd.)

PARTICULARS OF EXTANT MONUMENTS AT VISHNUPUR (*Contd.*)

Name of the temple: (in use or abandoned)	Location	Material used and type of structure	Date and builder	Embellishments
Rādhā-Govinda (abandoned)	South of Lāl-bāndh	Laterite: *Ekaratna*	1729 A.D.: Krishna Singh	Laterite sculptures on walls
Rādhā-Mādhav (abandoned)	-do-	-do-	1737 A.D.: Chuḍāmani, wife of Krishna Singh	-do-
Rādhā-Syām (in use)	Within the fort	-do-	1758 A.D.: Chaitanya Singh	-do-
Krishna (abandoned)	-do-	Brick: *Sikhara*	—	Some terracotta figures on walls
Balarām (abandoned)	-do-	-do-	—	-do-
Nikunjabihāri (abandoned)	-do-	-do-	—	-do-
Kesar Rāy (abandoned)	-do-	-do-	—	-do-
Nandalāl (abandoned)	South-west of Lāl-bāndh	Laterite: *Ekaratna*	—	—
Sridhara (in use)	Bosepārā	Brick. *Navaratna*	End of 18th century	Profuse terracotta ornaments on facade

common in rural Bengal. The Jor-Bāṅglā temple is composed of two rectangular *do-chālā* structures joined together and surmounted by a *chār-chālā* tower and is one of the finest specimens of its kind in West Bengal. The architectural principles on which the last three types are based consist of a square sub-structure with curved eaves borrowed directly from the curvilinear cornices of a Bengali hut. Upon such a support rises a single tower, of variable cross-section, in the middle of a slightly curved roof to form an *ekaratna* temple. The addition of four smaller extra towers at the corners of the roof results in a *pancharatna* (five-towered) shrine illustrated by the Syām Rāy and the Madan-Gopāl temples. A further elaboration has been accomplished in the *navaratna* (nine-towered) temple (of which the Sridhara and a small stone temple to the south-west of Syām Rāy shrine are examples) by having a second storey supporting four more towers and the central tower, bringing the total to nine. The *āṭ-chālā* style, corresponding to the similar construction of Bengali thatched huts, is represented only by minor edifices in Vishnupur not worthy of detailed examination.

For reasons which are not very clear, the *ekaratna* style received the greatest attention of the Malla builders and the large number of extant instances speaks of the various experiments that were made in perfecting it. Peculiarly, the style never became popular beyond the limits of the Malla capital. No place in West Bengal except Vishnupur can boast of such a wide variety of magnificent temples built both in laterite and in brick. T. Bloch, one-time Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India, Eastern Circle, had aptly remarked that "it is not on account of their age or their historical associations that these temples claim the interest of archaeologists but because they represent the most complete set of specimens of the peculiar Bengali style of architecture."[1]

The *Rās-mancha*, representing an architectural style all its own, calls for a special mention. This earliest extant religious edifice at Vishnupur built by Bir Hāmbir stands on a spacious laterite plinth, the sanctum being enclosed by three successive circumambulatory galleries having, respectively, five, eight and ten arched opening on each side. The outermost arches of brick exhibiting terracotta decorations on the spandrels, are capped on all sides by a continuous row of small *do-chālā* and *chār-chālā* structures (some of which have been repaired) from the rear of which rises the stepped pyramidal brick tower ending in a semi-circular finial. During the Malla reign, it is said, all the images of Krishna and Rādhikā in Vishnupur used to be placed in the sanctum of this building on the occasion of the *Rās* festival held on the full moon day of the Bengali month of *Kārtik*. The high plinth as also the

[1] Report, Archaeological Survey, Bengal Circle, for 1903-04 and Report, Archaeological Survey of India for 1903-04.

numerous arched openings no doubt helped the assembled crowds to have a good view of the exhibited idols.

Most of the Vishnupur temples display on their outer walls an array of sculptural decorations. They represent various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, numerous tales from the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata, lores from Hindu mythology as also various social, secular, floral and geometrical motifs. The most elaborate terracotta ornamentations are to be found on the Syām Rāy, Jor-Bāṅglā and Madan-Mohan temples while the Rādhā-Syām shrine provides copious examples of similar devices in laterite once covered with stucco plaster. The contemporary sculptors of Vishnupur obviously drew their inspiration from the doll-making, wood-carving and indigenous *paṭ* painting traditions which had a glorious past in Bengal. The arrangement of the extensive panels also speak highly of the imagination and ingenuity of the builders. The effect produced by a seemingly limitless display of figurative, floral and geometrical designs is never monotonous but is, on the contrary, very pleasing indeed. Besides catering to the religious sentiments of the beholders, they have preserved for posterity a rich store-house of sculptures depicting social manners and customs of a bygone age.

Apart from the temples discussed above, there are two flat-roofed structures in Vishnupur which do not possess any architectural merit but are held in high esteem by the local people. The temple of Mrinmayee, the family deity of the Malla kings, stands within the fort area and bears a modern inscription stating that it was erected by Jagat Malla in 997 A.D.—a claim which is liable to be gravely doubted. A similar temple dedicated to Briddhāksha at Sānkhāripārā houses a *dharma-silā*.

Seen in their proper perspective, the splendid monuments of Vishnupur would appear to belong to a certain period of the architectural traditions cherished in this part of the country over many centuries. The noble temples at Bahulārā, Sonātopal and Dihar are the earliest extant examples of a building movement which reached a stage of grand fruition under the Vaishnava kings of Mallabhum who were also great patrons of arts, letters, handicrafts and music. All over India, architectural activities, more often than not, have been a royal prerogative throughout the ages. In the country ruled over by the Malla princes, temple building activities, which gathered considerable momentum from the end of the 16th to the end of the 18th centuries, petered out with the decline and fall of the Malla power.

APPENDIX

List of Dak Bungalows etc. in Bankura District*

Category	Location	Controlling authority
Circuit House	Bankura town	District Magistrate, Bankura
Tourist Lodge	Vishnupur town	Director of Tourism, West Bengal
Guest House	Jayrāmbāṭi (P. S. Kotulpur)	Rāmakrishna Mission Āsram; Jayrāmbāṭi, Bankura
Youth Hostel	Jhilimili (P. S. Ranibandh)	
	Mukuṭmanipur (P. S. Khatra)	District Physical Education Officer, Bankura
Dak Bungalow	Bankura town	District Magistrate, Bankura
	D. V. C. Colony, Sonamukhi	Executive Engineer, Construction Division No. II (B & I), D. V. C.; Sonamukhi, Bankura
	Vishnupur	Executive Engineer, Bankura Division, P.W. (Roads) Department; Bankura
Inspection Bungalow	Bankura town	Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division; Bankura
	Mukuṭmanipur (P. S. Khatra)	Executive Engineer, Kangsabati Canals Division No. II; P.O. Khatra, Dist. Bankura
	Susuniā (P. S. Chhatna)	Principal Agricultural Officer, Bankura
	Nagardāṅgā (P. S. Mejia)	Executive Engineer, P.W.D.; Bankura
	Onda	,,
	Vishnupur town	,,
	Bankura town	Chairman, Zilla Parishad, Bankura
	Beliātore (P. S. Barjora)	,,
	Dalpur (P. S. Chhatna)	,,
	Indpur	,,
	Joyrāmpur (P. S. Vishnupur)	,,
	Khatra	,,
	Kotulpur	,,
	Krishnanagar (P. S. Patrasayer)	,,
	Kusthal (P. S. Gangajalghati)	,,

*Source : District Magistrate, Bankura.

(*Contd.*)

Category	Location	Controlling authority
	Piārdobā (P. S. Vishnupur)	Chairman, Zilla Parishad, Bankura
	Ranibandh	,,
	Saltora	,,
	Simlapal	,,
	Sonamukhi	,,
	Taldangra	,,
	Vishnupur (under construction)	,,
Rest House	Daldali (P. S. Onda)	Executive Engineer, Irrigation; Bankura
	Hārmāsrā (P. S. Taldangra)	,,
	Bānskhāl (P. S. Raipur)	S.D.O., Kangsabati Canals Sub-division No. VIII, under Executive Engineer, Kangsabati Canals Division No. II; P.O. Khatra, Bankura
	Jhikukhāl (P. S. Raipur)	,,
	Chāmkerā (P .S. Simlapal)	S.D.O., Kangsabati Canals Sub-division No. III, under Executive Engineer, Kangsabati Canals Division No. II; P.O. Khatra, Bankura
	Gorābāri (P. S. Khatra)	Executive Engineer, Left Bank Division; P.O. Gorābāri, Bankura
	Pākhannā (P. S. Barjora)	Executive Engineer, Right Bank Division; Sonamukhi, Bankura
	Sonamukhi town	,,
	Kadamdeuli (P S. Indpur)	S.D.O., Kangsabati Canals Sub-division No. V, under Executive Engineer, Kangsabati Canals Division No. II; P.O. Khatra, Bankura
	Miṭhā-ām (P. S. Ranibandh)	,,
	Saharghāṭi (P. S. Taldangra)	Executive Engineer, Kangsabati Canals Division No. III; Vishnu-pur, Bankura
	Ādkāṭā (P. S. Joypur)	Divisional Forest Officer, Bankura
	Amarkānan (P. S. Gangajalghati)	,,
	Āsnāsundarpur (P. S. Taldangra)	,,

(*Contd.*)

Category	Location	Controlling authority
	Bānkādaha (P. S. Vishnupur)	Divisional Forest Officer, Bankura
	Churāmanipur (P. S. Sonamukhi)	,,
	Hirbāndh (P. S. Khatra)	,,
	Jāmkānāli (P. S. Raipur)	,,
	Joypur	,,
	Maṭgodā (P. S. Raipur)	,,
	Murloo (P. S. Saltora)	,,
	Patrasayer	,,
	Ranibandh	,,
	Ratanpur (P. S. Onda)	,,
	Simlapal	,,
	Kotulpur (under construction)	Executive Engineer, Kangsabati Canals Division No. III; Vishnupur, Bankura
	Vishnupur	,,
	D. V. C. Colony, Sonamukhi	Executive Engineer, Construction Division No. II (B & I), D. V. C., Sonamukhi, Bankura
	Indas	,,
	Bankura town	Chairman, Zilla Parishad, Bankura
	Simlapal	,,
	Vishnupur	,,
Private Rest House	Bankura town	Messrs. Shewbux Satyanarain
Rest Room	Bankura town	Divisional Forest Officer, Bankura
	Sonamukhi	Block Development Officer, Sonamukhi
Rest Shed	Mouleswar (P. S. Onda)	Executive Engineer, Irrigation; Bankura
	Indas	Executive Engineer, Right Bank Division; Sonamukhi, Bankura
	Kānṭābāndh (P. S. Barjora)	,,
	Patrasayer	,,

DESCRIPTION OF ART PLATES

PLATE I : The tower of the brick temple of Siva at Bahulārā, 7·2 km. (4½ miles) north-east of Ondāgrām railway station on the Kharagpur-Ādrā section of the South Eastern Railway. Built in or about the 11th century and richly decorated with plastered terracotta embellishments, it is considered by experts as an outstanding product of Indian temple architecture. (Details at pp. 520-3).

PLATE II : The dilapidated and abandoned brick temple at Sonātopal, 8 km. (5 miles) east of Bankura town. Built in or about the 11th century, the shrine, in its days of glory, was one of the finest monuments in the district comparable in dimensions and excellence of execution to the more famous temple at Bahulārā. (Details at pp. 567-9).

PLATE III : The remains of the stone temples of Shāḍeswara and Saileswara (the latter in the foreground) at Dihar, 6·4 km. (4 miles) north-east of Vishnupur town. Built in the first half of the 11th century, these Sivaite shrines are remarkable examples of religious architecture in the district. (Details at pp. 536-7).

PLATE IV : The massive stone temple of Siva at Ekteswar, 3·2 km. (2 miles) south-east of Bankura town. One of the oldest shrines in the district, its present stunted form is the result of successive restorations. (Details at pp. 537-8).

PLATE V : Built around the 16th century A.D. according to the Orissan version of the *Nāgara-sikhara* style of temple architecture, the abandoned stone shrine at Hārmāsrā, 10·5 km. (6½ miles) west of Tāldāṅgrā, is an outstanding religious edifice in the district. (Details at pp. 540-2).

PLATE VI : Built at the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century by Bir Hāmbir, the *Rās-mancha*, the earliest extant Malla edifice at Vishnupur, is a quaint, pyramidal brick structure displaying terracotta ornaments on outer walls. (Details at pp. 576 & 578-9).

PLATE VII : Fine terracotta panels (which, as temple decorations, were practically exclusive to Bengal in the late mediaeval period) on the facade of the abandoned *Jor-Bāṅglā* brick temple at Vishnupur built by Raghunāth Singh I in 1655 A.D. (Details at pp. 576 & 578).

PLATE VIII : Close-up of an exquisite terracotta panel depicting *Rās-mandala* (Krishna dancing with *gopinis* in concentric circles) on the wall of the abandoned brick temple of Syām Rāy at Vishnupur built by Raghunāth Singh I in 1643 A.D. In point of profusion and excellence of terracotta decorations, this shrine may very well be the best of its kind in West Bengal. (Details at pp. 576 & 579).

PLATE IX : The famous 4th century rock inscription of King Chandravarmā on the wall of a cave in Susuniā Hill. (Details at pp. 60-3).

PLATE X : Date-plaques of important temples in Bankura district in contemporary script. Except the last inscription at the bottom right corner, which is from the Rāmakrishna temple at Sābrākon (P.S. Tāldāṅgrā), the others are from various temples in Vishnupur town. The top one is from Syām Rāy temple and those in the left column, from top to bottom, are from Jor-Bāṅglā, Lālji, Kālāchānd and Tejpāl shrines, while the one at the top of the right column is from Rādhā-Syām temple. (Details at pp. 576-7).

PLATE XI : The sanctum of the Siddheswara Siva temple at Bahulārā also housing against the rear wall stone images of Ganesa (left) and Pārswanātha (right) suggesting a fusion of Brahminical Hindu and Jain religious practices. (Details at pp. 69-71 & 522).

PLATE XII : An abraded stone image of the Jain pontiff Pārswanātha in the precincts of the modern Siva temple at Bihārināth (P.S. Sāltorā) signifying that this erstwhile seat of Jainism was subsequently taken over by Brahminical Hinduism. (Details at pp. 71 & 530).

PLATE XIII : Traditionally used as votive offerings to rural deities, the clay horses of Pānchmurā (P.S. Tāldāngrā) are now internationally known as symbols of the artistic excellence of the virile folk-art of West Bengal. (Details at pp. 553-5).

PLATE XIV : A *Manasā-thān* (seat of the serpent deity *Manasā*) under a roadside tree near Sonāmukhi. Such *thāns* of *Dharma*, *Manasā* and other folk deities displaying votive clay horses and elephants, can be seen all over the district. (Details at pp. 209 & 220).

PLATE XV : A colossal piece of ordnance called *Dalamardan* (lit. 'disperser of the enemy') manufactured by Malla artisans and now preserved at Vishnupur. (Details at pp. 87 & 574).

PLATE XVI : Two Santal maidens of the village of Netkāmlā (P.S. Sāltorā) in all their finery typifying the unsophisticated charm of the large Santal population of the district.

PLATE XVII : Downstream view of the radial gates of the Kangsābati reservoir with the 'Kangsābati Bhavan' (Mukutmanipur Inspection Bungalow) seen at top left and a portion of the reservoir at top right corners. (Details at pp. 545-6).

PLATE XVIII : A fossil remain of *Palaeoloxodon namidicus*, a predecessor of the elephant which lived 40,000 years ago, discovered in 1966 by the Directorate of Archaeology, West Bengal, near Susuniā Hill. (Details at p. 569).*

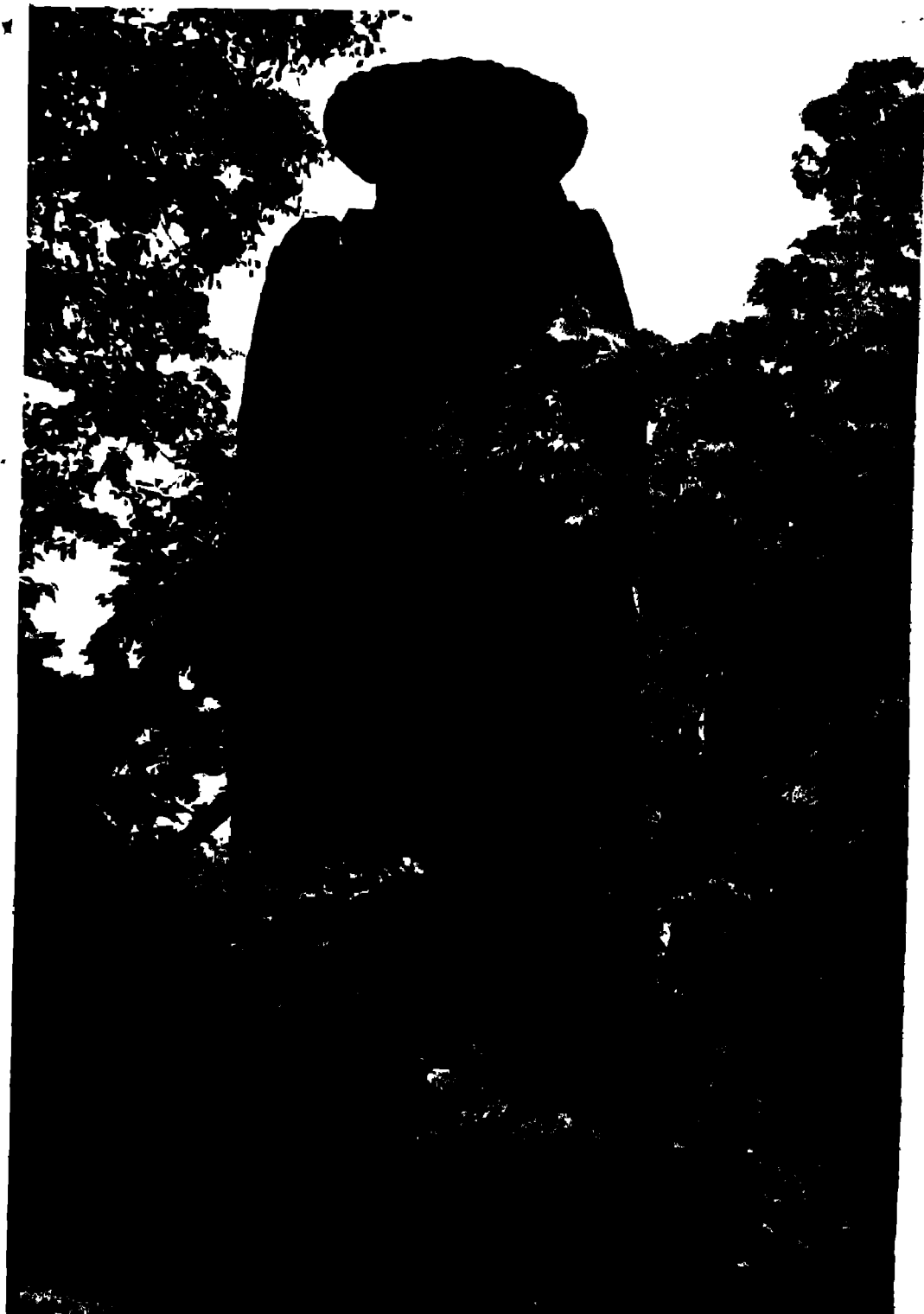
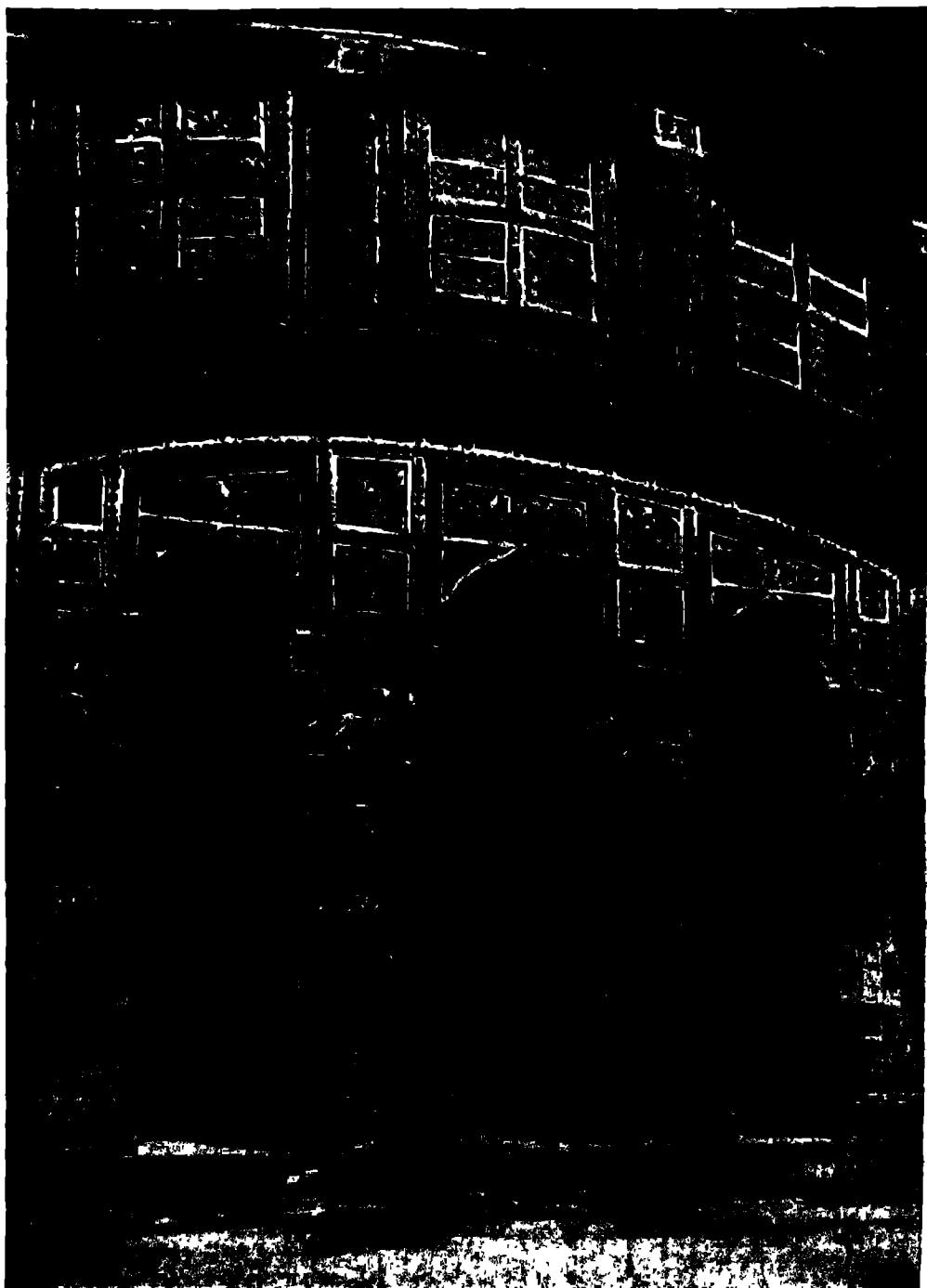
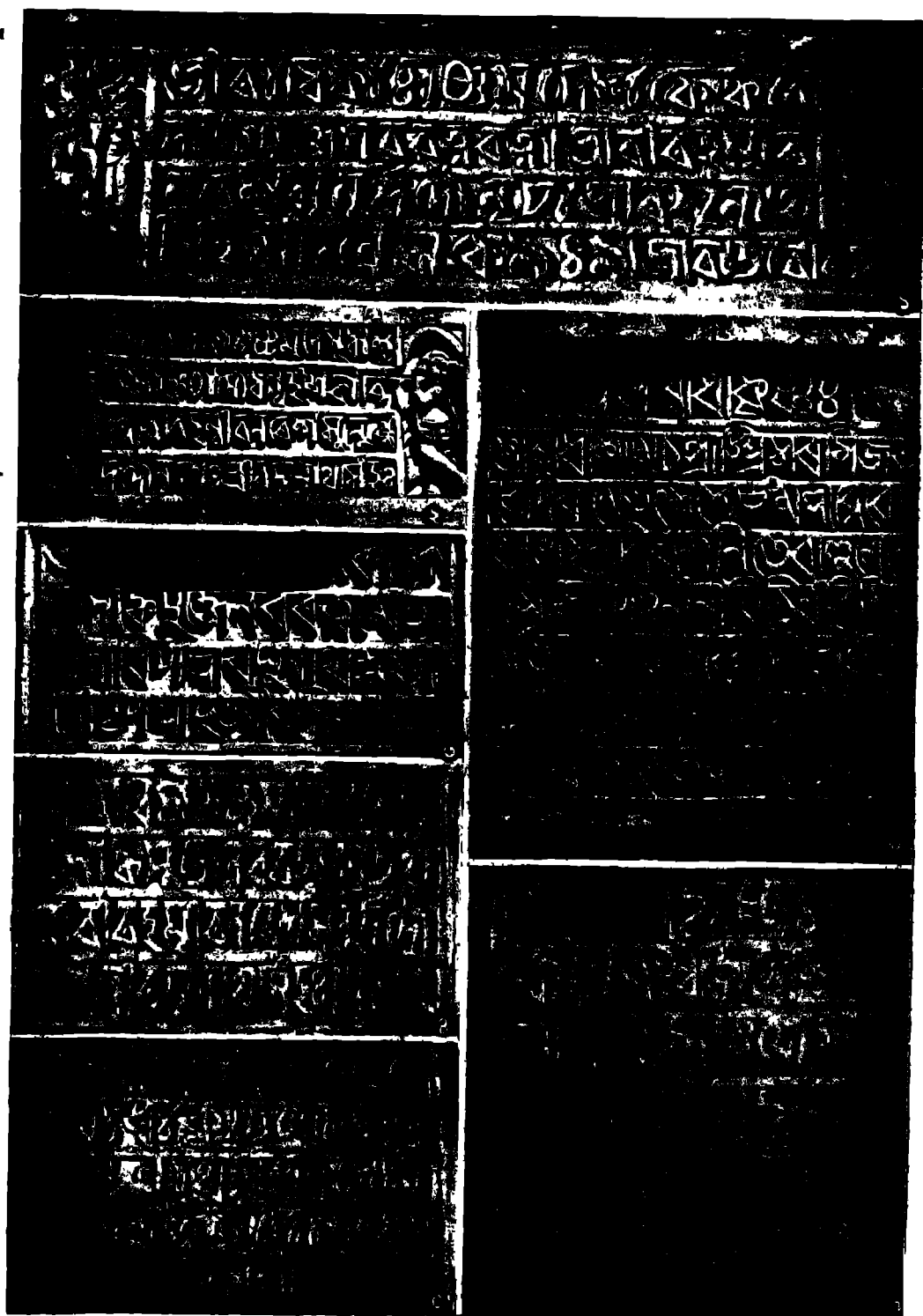
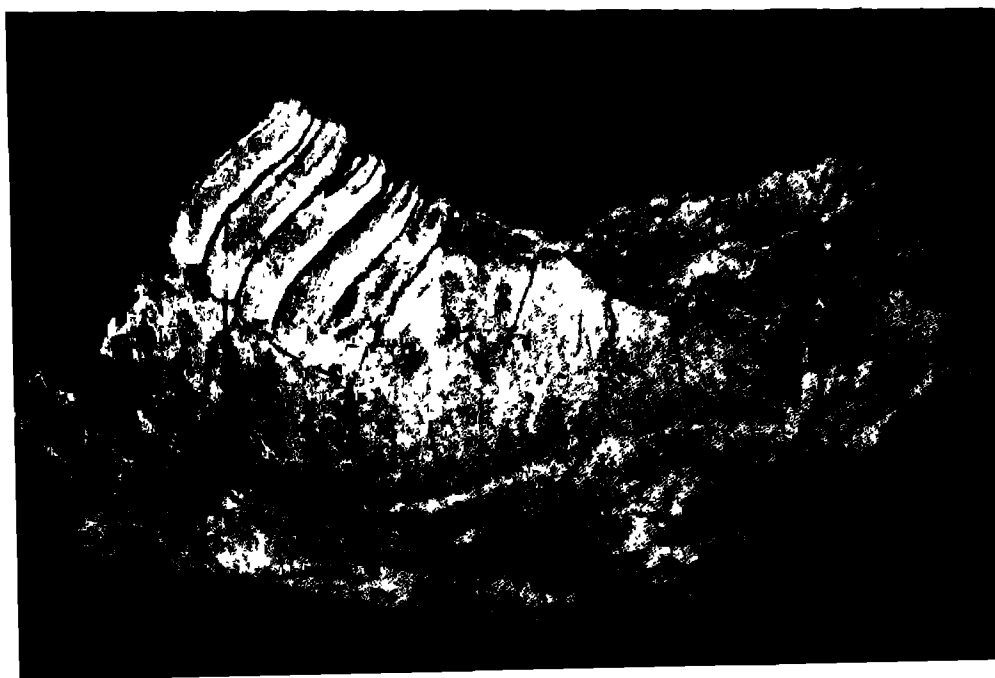
*(Plates IX and XVIII are reproduced from pictures made available by the Director of Archaeology, West Bengal. The other photographs, taken by Amiya Kumar Banerji, now State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers, are, except Plate XVII, reproduced from his book *Bānkurār Mandir* through the courtesy of the publishers, Messrs. Shishu Sāhitya Samsad).

PLATE III

PLATE V

LATE IX

LATE XVII

ATE XVIII

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INDEX

(Key: ā=আ | आ; ō=ঔ | औ; ai=ঐ | ऐ; ṁ=ং | ं; ṅ=ঙ | ङ; ch=চ | च; chh=ছ | छ; t=ত | त; ṭ=ট | ट; ṭh=ঠ | ठ; ḍ=ড | ड; ḍh=ঢ | ढ; s=শ,স | स, श; sh=ষ | ष)

CORRIGENDA

Page	72, last line (f.n.)	read	Sikharbhum	for	Sakharbhum
,,	110, line 41	,,	Verelst	,,	Gerelst
,,	163, lines 3, 6 & 11	,,	Sāridharma	,,	Shridharma
,,	343, line 2	,,	520	,,	1,520
,,	,, ,, 4	,,	39	,,	114
,,	365 ,, 26	,,	Canals	,,	Canal
,,	,, ,, 27	,,	Office	,,	Officer